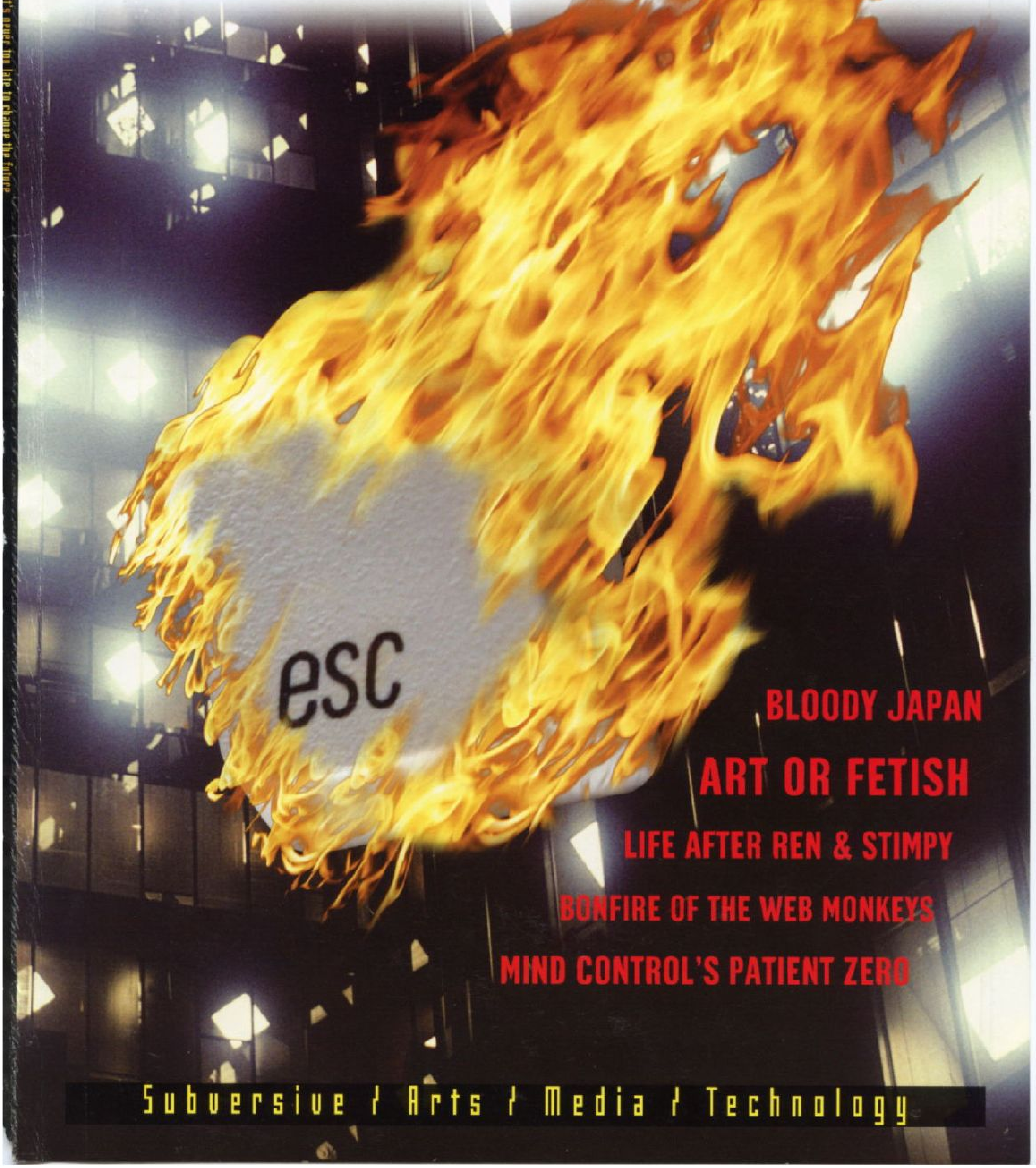
£5.95

black_ice

It's never too late to change the future.

issue 4



Dedication

I would like to dedicate the re-launch of Black Ice to Raymond 'Falcan' Brooks who very sadly, took his own life in April this year.

Looking back over the long time I knew him, his inquisitisitive nature and friendship inspired me in so many different ways.

A most gifted, trusted and loyal friend who will never be forgotten.

Chris 'Paradigm' Woods
Director, Black Ice Media

Editor/Publisher
Mark Bennett
blackice@pavilion.co.uk
editor@blackicemedia.net

Art Director
Tim Harling
07771 901110
tidy.tim@btopenworld.com

Associate Editor
Mark Pilkington

Cover Illustration
Steve Caplin
(Please note no escape keys were harmed in the composition of this image)

Contributors:
Damien Drake
David Wood
Doug Devaney
Edward Venn
Emilia Telese
Guy Ogilvy
Jack Sargeant
Jenifer Morgan
Jonathan Swain
Julian Weaver
Kat Valdes
Kevin Williams
Rose Lewis
Michael Prochak
Mike Jay
Nicol E Cseko
Louise Wainwright
YU-Rubber Brain

Black Ice Media Ltd registered HQ:
69 Faversham Ave
Bush Hill Park
Enfield, EN1 2BX

Black Ice Magazine Editorial Offices:
Top Flat
2 Hollingbury Road
Brighton, East Sussex
ENGLAND BN1 7JA
tel: 01273 298146
cell: (07905) 219429

Subscription and Correspondance:
Black Ice Media
PO Box 92
Brighton BN2 3WR

Website:
www.blackicemedia.net
subscription@blackicemedia.net
advertising@blackicemedia.net
submission@blackicemedia.net

Distribution:
PH Distribution
0118 942 8926

Japan:
Edward Venn,
SMG Holdings Co. Ltd.
Deux Chateaux Blanc #2-303
1356 Kobuchi
Kasukabe Saitama
344-0007 Japan
Tel/Fax: 81- (0)48-752-7137
Mob: 090-7280-0114
dapi_editor@yahoo.ca

USA:
Louise Wainwright
(917) 991-8656
louisewainwright@hotmail.com

Issue no 4. Black Ice Magazine is published Quarterly by Black Ice Media Ltd.

CONNECTING.....

CONTENTS

Consumer Ode: 001

THE BEST A MAN CAN GET

Doug Devaney

OTHERS MAY HAVE LEFT ME
NURSING SCARLET RASHES,
WITH SCHOOLGIRL-TUGGED HAIR
OR FELINE-CLAWED SCRATCHES

BUT YOUR TOUCH BRINGS ME CLOSER,
EVER CLOSER, CLOSER STILL.
EVERY MORNING, EVERY NIGHT
I'M FOAMING AT THE THRILL.

OTHERS MAY HAVE TEMPTED ME
WITH FANCY NAMES AND GRIPS,
THEIR PROMISES OF SMOOTH RIDES,
THEIR LUBRICATED STRIPS

BUT EACH DAY WHEN YOU DRAW THE
CREAM FROM MY WHITE-LATHERED HEAD,
I KNOW THAT I EXPERIENCE
THE BEST A MAN CAN GET.

WHAT NEED HAVE I OF WOMEN,
THEIR DOUBLE-EDGED FAVOURS,
WHEN I CAN POSSESS YOU,
MY GILLETTE MACH THREE SHAVER?



MACS ARE GOOD AND PCs ARE BAD

The holy war that ranges over which is the better operating system and computer - Mac vs PC continues with the use of subliminal product placement.

For fans of plot twisting hit series '24 they are able to decode who's the good guys simply by the computer the characters are using. Simply; Macs are good and PCs are bad.

Leading man Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) uses an Apple Cube and a titanium PowerBook, while his agents all use PowerBooks, iBooks and PowerMacs. If there's a PC to be spotted in his workplace and there's a few - its an immediate give away over who the traitors are.

This is not the first time this Mac/PC good/bad as it was obvious in 'Mission Impossible' with Tom Cruise using a PowerBook.

However the visual cues don't stop there in '24' as show writer Michael Loceff revealed; 'The bad guys use Nokia and the good guys, Ericsson. The good guys play chess and the bad guys play Go. The good guys eat popcorn and reconstituted soy protein and the bad guys eat red meat. The good guys are on the quarter system and the bad guys on semesters'

SCI-FI FILM MIRRORS CYBORG CAT SPY

Recently declassified documents show that the CIA tried to uncover the Kremlin's deepest secrets during the 1960s by turning cats into walking bugging devices under the code name: Acoustic Kitty. Coincidentally in the same year a British film called 'Spy With a Cold Nose' featured a dog wired up to eavesdrop on the Russians

Described by former CIA officer Victor Marchetti, as "a gruesome creation", Acoustic Kitty was surgically altered to accommodate transmitting and controlling devices. Marchetti explained: "They slit the cat open, put batteries in him, wired him up. The tail was used as an antenna. They made a monstrosity. They tested him and tested him. They found he would walk off the job when he got hungry, so they put another wire in to override that."

The technology is thought to have cost more than £10 million. Marchetti added: "They took it out to a park and put him out of the van, and a taxi comes and runs him over. There they were, sitting in the van with all those dials, and the cat was dead"

The file, which was one of 40 to be declassified from the CIA's closely guarded Science and Technology Directorate is still partly censored. This implies either that the CIA was embarrassed about disclosing all the details of Acoustic Kitty, which took five years to design, or that the technology has been developed beyond that point and is in use in some way to this very day. Have you spoken to your cat today?

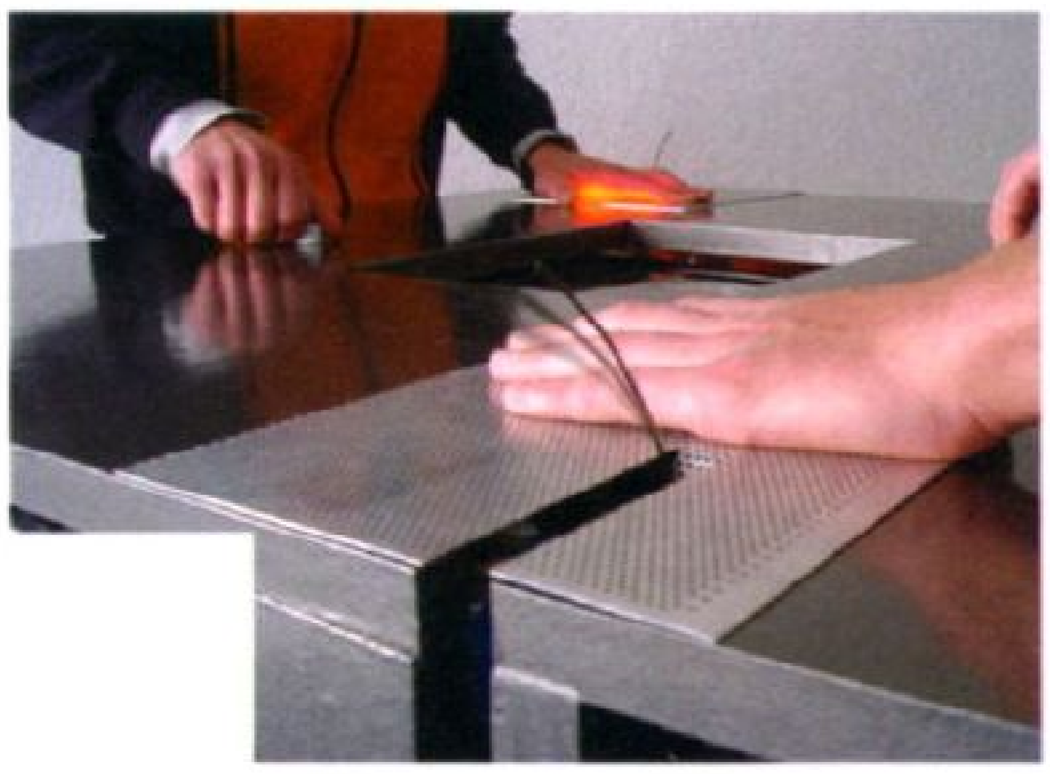
FDA GREEN LIGHTS IMPLANTABLE CHIPS

The US Federal Food and Drug Administration has ruled that the VeriChip implantable microchip is not a regulated device. Plans are underway now for immediate sale in the US for human beings. The technology is already in use for identifying pets and has been an option for people in high risk jobs including diplomats.

The VeriChip is being marketed as a medical aid which allows hospital workers to access patients' health records with a simple wave of the wand, or reader. The FDA has not approved storing medical information on the chip, the device's ID can be cross-referenced with a computer database holding patients' records

In South America, the device is bundled with a GPS-unit and sold to potential kidnapping victims. The company is currently developing a separate implantable GPS product for kidnapping targets that should be completed in a year.

MACS MAKE THE PAINSTATION



If you happen across one of these units then aim to beat the top score of 30 minutes which is over 400 doses of pain. No word on the development of a joystation.

www.painstation.de

With a cheery colour scheme and an easy to use user interface it's hard to imagine the Mac as the driving force behind the German console The Painstation.

The video game that bites back is no urban legend. The Painstation does exist and, as in medieval duels, the psyched up players proudly wear their scars as initiatory badges of honour.



Essentially a Mac set up in an arcade cabinet playing Pong, the opponents stand facing each other with the right hand using a knob to control a pad. The left hand then has to remain on the PEU (Pain-Execution-Unit), to create an electric circuit to activate the game.

If a player misses the ball, it's not only annoying but also painful in a variety of different ways: heat, lashes or electric shocks - all of different duration and combination - depending on which PIS (Pain-Inflictor- Symbol) has been selected to judge lost balls and hits. If one of the competitors lifts a hand off the PEU – either out of pain overload or blacking out- they lose the duel.

At a cost of 1000 Euros to develop The Painstation is not in wide circulation, but can be found at the "Buero fuer Brauchbarkeit" in Cologne Kalk, Germany. The designers sometimes rent the units out to suitable events but they require personal supervision at all times. Sado-masochisitic party organisers - the most obvious target audience - need not apply as they won't let them be used in that way.

A SPEAKER IN YOUR HEAD

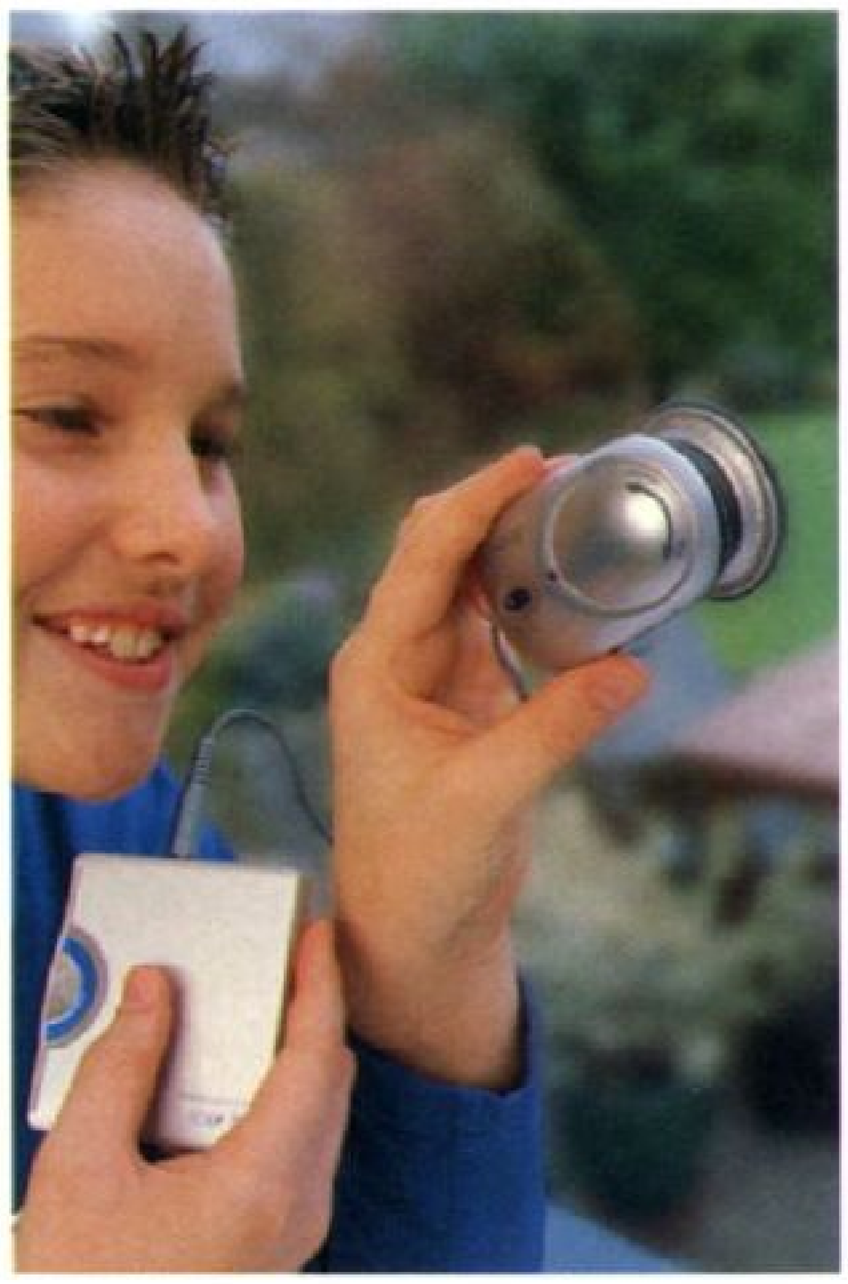
Have you ever heard voices in you head? If not you can try the experience by using the 'Soundbug' which reproduces sound without headphones or loudspeakers anywhere from any mini stereo jack equipped device.



The sound bug works by effectively creating a sounding-board out of the surface to which it is attached. It does this by using a rare material called Terfenol-D which was originally developed by the US military for underwater sonar applications. Permission had to be obtained from the US government for the material to be used in any other application.

A single Soundbug can generate sound levels of up to 75 dB peak and two Soundbugs can be linked in parallel to generate full stereo sound.

Richard May, President of Olympia, says that Soundbug is just the first in a range of revolutionary audio products to come from the company in the coming months: "later this year we will be introducing products designed to work with mobile phones, effectively providing 'instant' hands-free car kits. We will also introduce office-based conferencing products based on the same technology. Bluetooth wireless options will also follow soon."

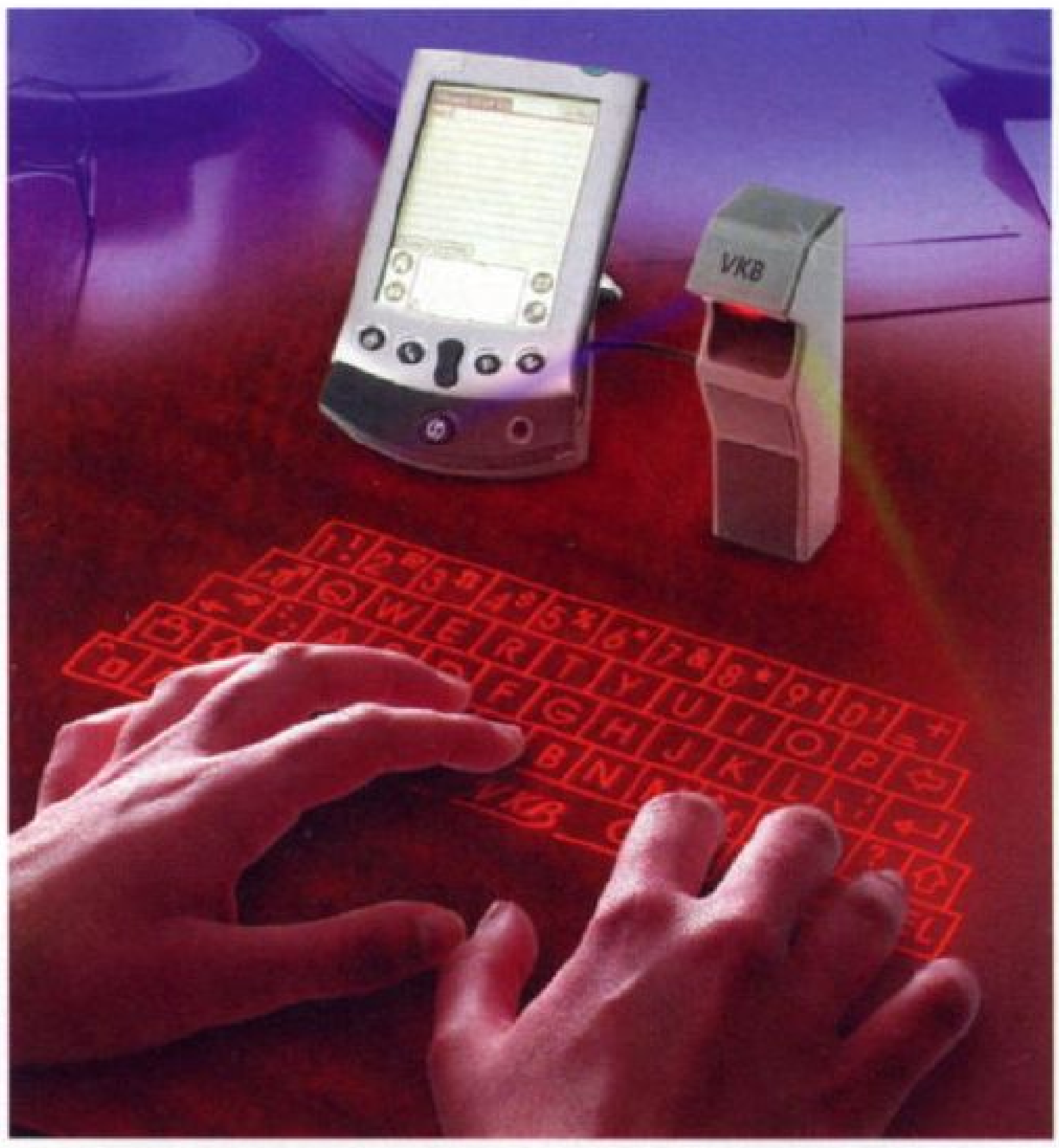


'GHOST' HAUNTING MICROSOFT XP

Users of computers that have been pre-installed with Microsoft's Windows XP and Office XP software have discovered mysterious happenings with their systems.

With all the hallmarks of a poltergeist haunting, the possessed computers insert words into documents, take over toolbars, activate options and generally pop up things that haven't been requested.

Although serious research is underway around the world to use computers to contact the dead (EVP), this feature is not installed in Microsoft XP, with the fault lying with the built-in voice recognition software, which is sometimes installed and activated by retailers as a default option.



BIG BROTHER IN YOUR COMPUTER

If you ever had the annoyance of having a boss that hovered around you like a vulture - keeping tabs on you as you went through the daily grind, then the latest release of WinWhatWhere will shift the paranoia to the computer itself and surpass even Orwell's predictions

Now with over 200,000 copies sold to everyone from suspicious spouses to the FBI, the software could secretly be reading all your typed words - even the ones you deleted - while surreptitiously snapping your picture. Multilingual support has also been added as well.

For a mere $99 dollars US, the downloadable program runs "hidden in plain sight." With stealth mode engaged it changes names every so often, and the files containing the information it gathers are given arbitrary old dates to make them difficult to root out.

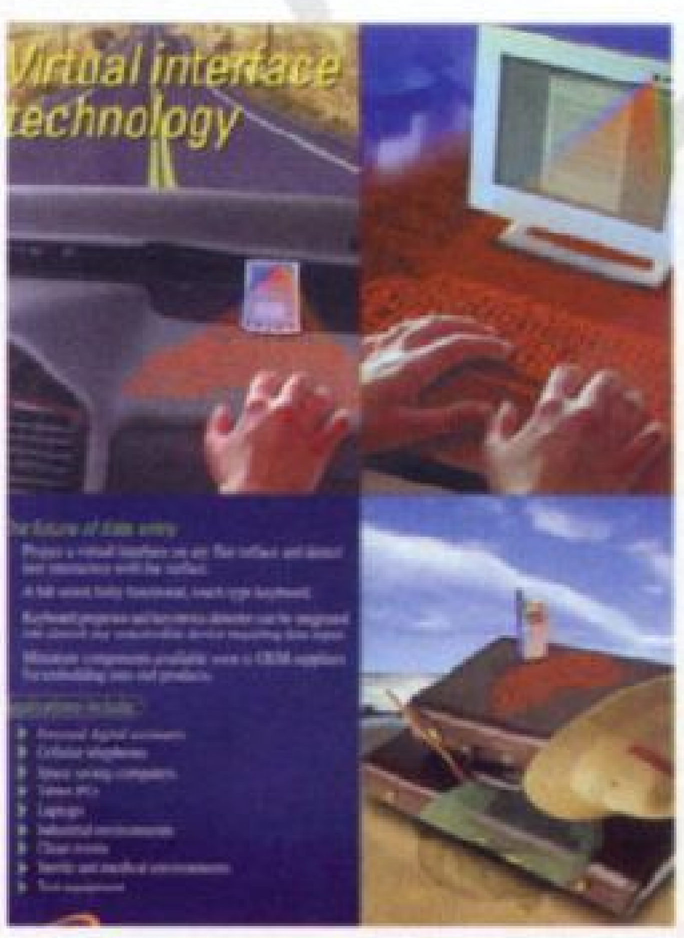
The installer can choose to have a user's every move sent to an e-mail address, or the program can be instructed to look for keywords like "boss," "Enron," "pornography" or "terrorist" and only send records when it finds those prompts.

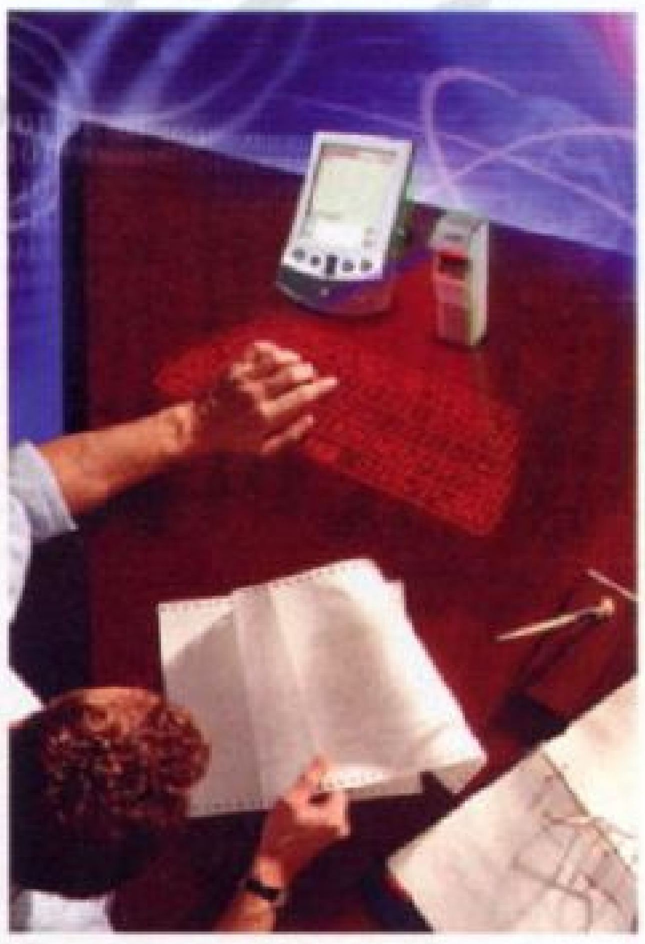
The software is not currently available for the Macintosh.

HELP FOR BIG HANDS

In another case of modern technology outstripping the ideas presented in episodes of Star Trek, Siemens Procurement Logistics Services has recently demonstrated a full-size fully functional virtual keyboard that can be projected and used on any surface.

The eerily glowing red keyboard can be integrated in mobile phones, laptops, tablet PCs, or medical environments where cleanliness is a priority. The mini projector that detects user interaction with the surface also simulates a mouse pad.





WIRELESS CHARGE

A Silicon Valley start-up, MobileWise Inc., based in Mountain View is aiming to ship a new technology at the end of the year that will make charging a battery powered devices less of a hassle.

The technology centres around a flat surface element, which is not a cradle, that allows safe charging of any MobileWise compatible device placed on top of it. Specifics of how the system works are vague at present.

NEXT GENERATION OF DVD FORMAT DECIDED: MAYBE

The world's big Nine electronics companies have agreed on a single standard and name - Blu-Ray - for the next generation video and computer optical disc. Not surprisingly the system works with a blue laser with 405 nm wavelength allowing for more data to be packed into the 12 centimetre disc.

A disc can stores 27GB of computer data, records 13 hours of broadcast TV or holds 2 hours of High Definition video. The data streams at 36 Mbps, which is fast enough for HDTV which was a stumbling block with the present DVD format.

The 27 GB capacity could increase later to 50GB, thanks to dual layer discs, proposed by Panasonic. The Blu-Ray group is still discussing whether the disc can be naked or must be housed in a protective cartridge.

Existing CD and DVD players and recorders will not be able to use Blu-Ray discs. New Blu-Ray players will need infra-red, red and blue lasers if they are also to play all kinds of CD and DVD recordings. No mention of DivX as a new encoding format was mentioned.

NICOTINE WITHDRAWL RELATED TO DISEASES

Smokers often fail to quit, in part because of the range of unpleasant symptoms that accompany nicotine withdrawal, including depression, fatigue, muscle aches and appetite changes.

A recent study conducted at Penn State has demonstrated that heavy or moderate smokers who stop smoking have symptoms similar to those experienced by patients undergoing an inflammatory response suggesting that anti-inflammatory medication might ease some nicotine withdrawal woes.

Further studies are required to narrow down which particular anti-inflammatory drugs might best reduce the unpleasant symptoms of nicotine withdrawal and support smokers while they quit.

THINKING CAP INVENTED

Two Australian scientists claim they have invented a real thinking cap that uses magnetic impulses to stimulate certain parts of the brain involved in creative tasks. Test subjects are reported to have improved drawing skills after just 15 minutes.

Professor Allan Snyder and Dr Elaine Mulcahy carried out their research at the Centre for the Mind in Sydney. Prof Snyder commented: "It's like you're an executive and you only see one paragraph of a report, while others see the whole 50 pages. We're bypassing the bit that sees the paragraph and looking at the whole 50 pages. That's the best analogy."

The inventors think their cap short-circuits the brain, allowing wearers to see the world in a new way. Professor Snyder added: "We were aware that certain types of brain-damaged people have extraordinary skills in art, music, mathematics, and memory, and I wanted to know if we could give rise to those extraordinary skills. (see *Acceptable Face of Mind Control, p.29*)

JEDI TO HIT THE BATTLEFIELD

In an ever increasing list of Star War names hijacked by the Military Industrial Complex, JEDI is due to be released into the battlefield to increase the speed and reliability of communications and limit friendly fire.

Essentially a palmtop with all the fittings running Windows-CE, the system is intended to help simplify the way soldiers send target co-ordinates and other vital information from the battlefield to control centres. The unit will contain combined laser range finding, GPS satellite positioning, a satellite phone and text messaging and quite possibly some CE games as well.

In field use the JEDI can be hooked up to laser range finding binoculars to target a reading on its position, speed and direction of travel. The soldier identifies the type of vehicle by pointing to simple icons on the screen which then relays the encoded data via satellite in as little as 3 seconds.

To test the robustness of the palmtop the Army had a game of football using a JEDI as the ball - and its reported that it worked just fine afterwards.

DNA COMPUTERS

Israeli scientists have built a DNA computer so small that over a trillion of them could fit in a test tube, performing a billion operations per second with 99.8 percent accuracy.

Since the microscopic computer's input, output and software are made up of DNA molecules - which store and process encoded information in living organisms - there is no easy way get the information in and out or for that matter plug in a USB port to use a joystick.

"We have built a nanoscale computer made of biomolecules that is so small you cannot run them one at a time. When a trillion computers run together they are capable of performing a billion operations," explained Professor Ehud Shapiro of the Weizmann Institute.

For sheer capacity DNA can hold more information in a cubic centimetre than a trillion CDs. The double helix molecule that contains human genes stores data on four chemical bases — known by the letters A, T, C and G — giving it massive memory capability.

DNA computing is a very young branch of science which started less than a decade ago, when Leonard Adleman of the University of Southern California kick-started the field by using DNA in a test tube to solve a mathematical problem.

ACCESS

BIG BROTHER IN MY PRINTER

Xerox has confirmed that it and other manufacturers are now embedding 'invisible' IDs in the background 'noise' of their colour copiers and printers.

Billed as an anti-counterfeiting measure, the implementation of the technology means that every document created on these machines is traceable back to its source. Consequently, 'anonymous' letters and flyers, long an important tool for people challenging the powers that be, may one day be impossible to create.

However the implementation of this technology has not effected the market for old office copiers and even more ancient dot-matrix printers. (see *hi-res media, p.*)

THE VISION WALKMAN

Scientists of the IAC and the University of La Laguna have created a pair of glasses so the blind can 'see' via their hearing. The knack of these glasses is to make the brain believe that the objects that surround us are covered with loudspeakers.

In the same way as you can tell where a sound is coming from and the objects approximate distance from you when you close your eyes, blind people could create their own virtual reality by seeing through sound. The headphones emit sounds from the shorter end of the spectrum, creating a virtual acoustic space, rather like a radio when you are scanning the wavebands for a particular station.

Developed at a cost of 3,61m Euros the glasses, according to their commercial plans, will be available to buy in 2004.

The project has come up with a medical surprise. Some of the blind people who have tried the specs have started receiving visual stimuli which, they say, is the brain trying to activate their vision.

FED EX'D FOOD

Those with large enough mail boxes and advance knowledge of when a case of the munchies will hit (we know who you are) should check out Yummy Delights. Rising from the New York skyline like a cartoon dayglo phoenix is the new mail order, online, dotcom, catalog company and all round highly specialist firm selling healthy snacks.

But wait! Even if they say so themselves, these are indeed yummy. Public favorites are the Fat Free Brownies while the inhouse private favorite is the Low Fat Chocolate Meringues. And if your mom is too lazy to put you together a care package then she can click on the site and Yummy Delights will send you one on her behalf.

www.yummydelights.com

MONKEY BRAIN MOVES CURSOR

Like the plot of a bad science fiction film, scientists at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena have successfully implanted a series of 16 electrodes that allow a monkey to think actions into movement of a computer cursor and play a video game.

Using high-tech brain scans, the researchers determined that small clumps of cells in the posterior parietal cortex were active in the formation of the desire to carry out specific body movements.

The scientists found that the monkey became quite reluctant to move his arm to the reach command once the cursor was introduced into the game. Apparently it was easier just to think about reaching.

Several groups are currently working to develop methods of tracking brain signals without the use of surgically implanted electrodes.

BURNING FAT

A new process of burning fats in the space of a lunch hour has been develop by plastic surgeons in Israel where it has been successfully tested on pigs with plans for human trials in the UK next year.

The machine uses high-frequency ultrasound waves to break down fat deposits at a half litre per treatment. The fats are then absorbed into the patient's system and burned up by the body - which is dramatically less messy than liposuction.

Around the world, an estimated one million men and women a year are prepared to undergo liposuction. Americans alone spent £1.4 billion seeking the "perfect" figure last year.

RECIPE FOR REJUVENATING RATS DISCOVERED

Two dietary supplements available in healthfood stores have been found to dramatically improve both the activity, energy levels and cognitive functions of old rats when combined.

The findings were published by researchers from the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University and the University of California at Berkeley in three articles in a professional journal, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The studies combined two naturally occurring compounds: acetyl-l-carnitine and an antioxidant, alpha-lipoic acid. Earlier work demonstrated that either of these compounds have value in addressing physical and mental deterioration associated with ageing, but the latest research suggests a combination of the two works far better than either one separately.

Tory Hagen, an assistant professor in OSU's Linus Pauling Institute explained "After just a month, older rats whose diet was supplemented with these two compounds were about twice as active as our control rats, which remained largely inactive. They also had a much better memory and cognitive performance, measured by their ability to remember objects and spatial orientation."

Small clinical trials are already under way with humans to determine whether these compounds offer the same benefits to people. In the meantime anti-aging enthusiasts are self medicating with the combination.

MORE ADS AND LESS PROGRAMS

For American television and Rupert Murdoch's Sky channels which are saturated with advertisements to the point that a 1 hour show runs at 42 to 45 minutes, it's just too tempting to squeeze the program even further to get more Ad revenue in.

With the aid of the Digital Time Machine developed by Prime Image in San Jose, Calif, it's possible to get a full extra minute of ad time via micro-editing the TV show. The system works by removing duplicate frames over the course of the broadcast slot as opposed to whole scenes which would affect the flow of the show. Unlike traditional editing this does not affect the sound or the motion within the show.

Pulling mere frames at a time adds up and the $90,000 device can be programmed to remove 15 seconds, 30 seconds or even a full minute in real-time, so lucrative sports events can have additional advertisements without affecting the game. Industry trade publication *Electronic Media* reports that KEYE-TV in Austin, Texas, racked up $2 million in additional ad revenue by using the device.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL AND NOW DAMNED FAST

Users of ugly beige space-hogging desktop computers - your days are now numbered thanks to the 1 Ghz Transmeta Crusoe chip and innovative north London computer designers at Remote 12 Systems Ltd.

Set to revolutionise the computer industry, the final touches have just been put on the first release of their FastLART computer which sports the same over surface size of a package of cigarrettes.

What makes this device so impressive is the speed and openness, which is comparable to the latest desktop Windows machines and unheard of for a device of this type. The board is aimed at embedded and portable applications that need flexibility and an expansion route. System integrators and designers can use the FastLART as the main component for applications as diverse as home multimedia devices, intelligent kiosk systems, high power PDAs or even wearable computing applications and is currently available for OEMs, research institutes and system developers.

Portability is the key to the design and all components are chosen for their stingy use of juice. The board comes with 256MB of fast DDR SDRAM system memory integrated and this new memory technology offers 30% more performance than regular memory, while using half as much power. The system includes an integrated 2D/3D VGA chip, which supports simultaneous or separate use of a regular monitor, a TV or an LCD panel in resolutions up to 1280x1024 pixels. 16MB of on-board Flash memory allows diskless operation of any application.

Modular design is at the center of the FastLART board and features are added by adding various layers to build up a custom system, but overall the unit remains remarkably slim. A standard I/O board provides all the normal PC ports, including USB, PS/2 and IrDA. Further peripherals include Fast Ethernet, IEEE1394/FireWire and two 133MBps UltraATA hard disk attachment interface channels. Other boards add compact flash, PCMCIA and PCI ports and future developments include a 2.4ghz 802.11b board.

The FastLART is so flexible in fact that it supports a variety of different operating systems such as Microsoft Windows, Linux and BeOS.

Remote12 Systems Ltd: tel: (0208) 482 4393
sales@remote12.com

Found Image 001: CYBERBIKE

(first in a series of found net images)



This was image sent to us a while back and to date we have not found any information about it or where it's from. Based on the amount of styling and detail that has gone into both the bike and the accompanying chrome suited woman it would suggest that it's a prop from a film, TV series or possibly a corporate motorbike promotion. If it's the first two we definitely want to see the film or TV show. Any leads? First correct answer wins an issue of Black Ice while anyone providing a VHS wins a two year subscription.

RICOH RR1 Digital Camera

MARK PILKINGTON

The RR1 is Ricoh's latest addition to their Caplio range of light, slim and extremely portable units, bumping them up to the 4 megapixel CCD league. Initial appearances might lead you not to take these Caplios too seriously – they look a little like what a 70s Brownie user would imagine the 25th Century as being like – but after a short time getting to grips with the controls you'll find that these are seriously capable machines.

price: £749.99 inc VAT

www.ricoh-cameras.co.uk







In action:

Being so compact and streamlined, you might imagine the RR1 to be a little fiddly to use, and you'd initially be right – certainly chunky fingered types need not apply. Key settings – flash, image quality, self timer and memory location sit on top of the unit as nice shiny silver buttons, while the Heavy Weaponry is housed under the flip up LCD, accessed through rubber sheeting reminiscent of the old Intellivision console controllers.

A ring dial provides access to the different capture modes, and above and below this is the zoom slider. This was particularly tricky to get to grips with in the getting-to-know-you period, but actually works quite nicely once you're accustomed to it, allowing for accurate zoom control.

For the most part the camera is a pleasure to use, the only real problem being speed – it does take rather a long time to save and retrieve images at high resolutions. However, this is only really an issue if you're taking action shots or UFO spotting, and the multiple-take feature is swift enough to solve the problem if you're prepared. Battery life was a respectable two hours or so of operation, with about a 90 minute full charge time.

One other gripe is that the image extraction software provided with the camera is somewhat disappointing. USB transfer was slow and the user interface was bare to say the least. Nor is the RR1, or any of their cameras, recognised by Image Capture or Apple's new IPhoto software for OSX. Ricoh say that the relevant drivers will be made available soon. I ended up using a cheap Smart Card reader that works fast in both OSs.

Image quality:

The most impressive thing about the RR1, however, and, ultimately, what you want it for, are the results. And they're very good. Colours are bright and crisp, the slide from shade to dark is handled well, and the Macro images are particularly stunning. The camera copes well with low light levels, without much blurring with handheld shots. I used it in a number of different environments – from Kew Gardens' orchid house to an absinthe drenched book launch - and was always happy with the results. Don't pay too much attention to the video capture function – it only works at 288 x 216 dpi, and is next to useless in low light conditions – though budding Brackages could certainly put its impressionistic results to entertaining use. But it should only be considered an extra rather than a full feature.

Conclusion:

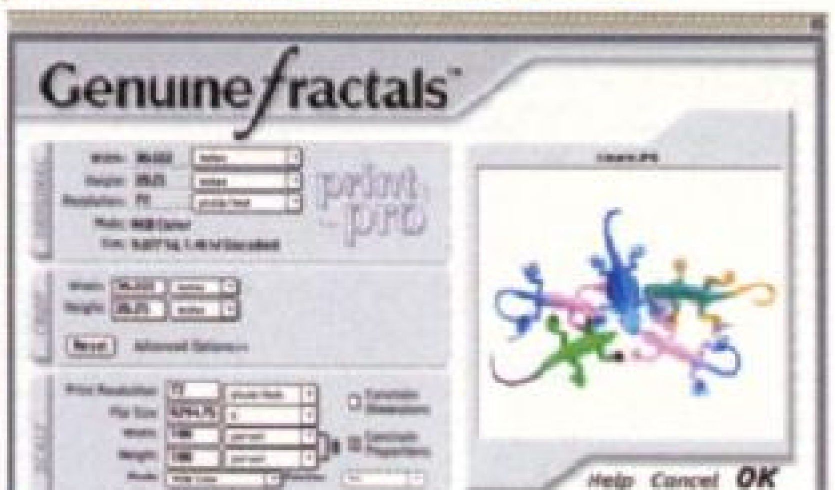
Given its small size and light weight, the RR1 delivers impressive results that should more than satisfy the high-end snap-shooter. If portability is a serious issue and you've got the money to spend, I'd happily recommend it, though do get your hands on one first to be sure that you'll be comfortable with the controls.

Key Elements

- 4.13 mega-pixel CCD providing images of resolutions up to 2272x1074 at three rates of compression .
- 3x Optical and 3x digital zoom 7.3-21.99mm lens (equivalent to 35-105 SLR) Shooting range of 24cm (9.4in.) - Infinity and a 1cm (0.4in.) -24cm (9.4in.) Macro function.
- 8MB internal memory allowing up to 128MB additional Smart Card memory.
- Text reading mode, with heightened contrast.
- Audio recording with built in mic (over 4 hours on a 128MB smartCard)

Genuine Fractals Print Pro 2.5

price:US$ 159.00 www.lizardtech.com







A solution for all those owners of rapidly-dating digital cameras is at hand with Genuine Fractals Print Pro - a handy application that sits in Photoshop on the PC or Mac and creates resolution-independent scalable images.

Fractals - once the domain of hippies and physics students selling glossy psychedelic prints at Camden Market now appear to have a real-world use in compression and image enlargement.

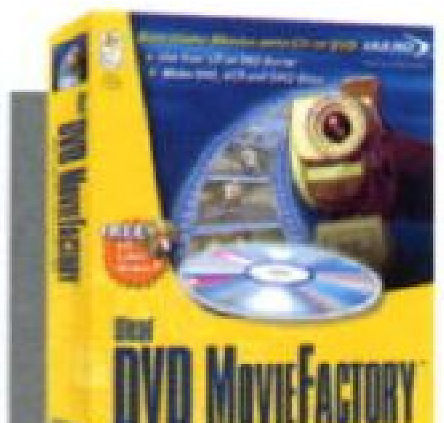
The program is activated by saving the image in one of two Genuine Fractal formats. Once encoded the image can then be opened up again at any desired resolution. Cropping, scaling and other settings are possible at this point.

When used in conjunction with older 1.2 or 2.0 million pixels digital cameras, Genuine Fractal formatted images easily match resolution with the new 4 and 5 million pixel models. Working with images that had minimal JPEG compression to start off with produced the best results. One suggested use in combination with higher res cameras is to shoot at lower resolution settings, thus saving on RAM but with the cost of memory these days this seems pointless.

Archiving of images for multi format use is the other main use of the program, with one saved image being able to function at any number of resolutions from web to print. Genuine Fractals Print Pro comes in several versions with a demo available from their website.

DVD Movie Factory

Price:£45 (inc VAT) www.ulead.co.uk / www.ulead.co.uk



OK, so you've made your first epic with prosumer DV equipment and a load of your mates like Mike Leigh and the end result looks pretty hot. Sale-able to Channel 4 even. So what next? Well you could laboriously dupe off VHS copies for everyone and their dog (who also made a brief, but pivotal, role in the short) or you could encode it for the web for the world to see, but the bandwidth limitations means a viewer can't distinguish one blurry character from the next. A third option now exists and it's less time consuming than the other and has an air of kudos to it too.

Full DVD authoring packages are now becoming standard for high end PCs and Macintosh so it's not surprising that stripped down versions of the software are now available for the PC for anyone to make professional disks.

DVD Movie Factory is a new application for Windows PCs that functions as an advanced capture controller for DV firewire cameras which will then digest the data and output suitable formats, whether it be for web streaming or the range of MPEG 1-2 types to make disks, be they VideoCDs or DVDs.

Once your film segments are encoded, basic authoring is achieved with Wizard settings that take the user through the building of the disk and a selection of menu templates which automatically insert still images from the encoded tracks. Annoyingly, the manual is very minimal and it requires a few run throughs to get the right results. It would also be useful to have an expert mode where standard templates, cheesy graphics and sounds can be added to or replaced with your own media. This can be done but requires some ferreting around and analysing files to do the swap overs.

But not everyone is gifted with a DVD burner as yet, although players are standard issue on most systems now. While not as familiar as DVD, the other formats are seriously worth considering and exploiting as they are burnt into generic - under a quid - CD-R or RW media, play on CD-ROM drive equipped Macs or PCs including laptops and on more recent DVD players.

The three MPEG formats to exploit are VideoCD, SuperVCD and miniDVD, each with an increasing quality but lower recording time available per disk. VideoCDs, while no where to be found in the west, are easily picked up in the Far East and are the staple recording format for films and TV series in preference to VHS, which is subject to problems in humid environments. Professionally encoded VCDs are comparable to VHS recordings for resolution.

SuperVCDs are near DVD quality and will average about 30 minutes per disk whereas VCDs are marginally over an hour but are only 320x240 in resolution. MiniDVDs contain even higher resolution but are limited to 15 minutes of recording.

Once all the data is in place with choice of menus and sounds then it's simply a matter of burning to blank media. Unfortunately the application did not like the burner we used so was unable to make a full disk. A hack around was to use Nero to make a basic play SuperVCD using the MPEG track without all the menus and extras. One of the great advantages of having the footage in digital format is that running off a full length disk is purely down to the speed of the burner which means mass production in under an hour.

DVD Movie Factory is a must-have application for anyone with a PC doing desktop video, either for home or professional use. It's easy to use and opens up a whole new range of time saving delivery methods.

Final Cut Pro 3.0 and Video Studio 6 hit the streets





Desktop video editing software continues to evolve at a clip, pushing the power of the systems to the max with two new releases of popular packages for both Macintosh and Windows systems.

Final Cut Pro 3 now taps the full potential of the PowerPC G4 processor's Velocity Engine to deliver real-time effects such as cross-dissolves, titles and colour correction without the need for third party video capture cards. Further enhancements to the package include the new OfflineRT format that offers five times compression of DV footage for off-line editing - greatly expanding the capacity of available material on PowerBook hard drive to 24 hours of content. Footage at full DV resolution can then be re-imported after an edit is completed. A suite of professional colour correction tools are also included in the upgrade.

Ulead's staple consumer Video Studio is now up to version 6 with major user interface overhaul to make it easier and more intuitive to use along with a range of features formerly only found in professional editors. Storyboard editing allows for simple assembling of a project by arranging clips & sequences.

An important feature is Video Studio's ability to directly convert on-the-fly source footage into MPEG 1 or 2 formats for DVD, without converting it to AVI first. To that end the software included a DVD authoring wizard for creating DVD, VCD and SVCD videos from within the editor.

Disgo











price: £25 for 8 meg www.mydisgo.com

One useful rule of thumb is that any new series of Star Trek will appear to be dated within a few years of its broadcast. The desktop terminals on the Next Generation look like left over Soviet hardware when compared to Apple's G4Cube and flat panel screens.

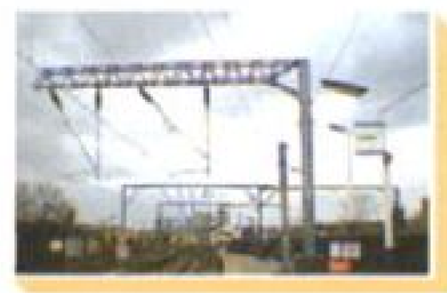
Disgo fits this category of sci-fi tech made real for the eager consumer. Essentially a compact ram with a USB jack, the Disgo replaces the need for diskettes or even 100 meg ZIP disks by slotting directly into a Mac or PC USB port and mounting like any hard drive. Packaging is designed for robustness and portability - why burn CDs or drag valuable laptops around when documents can be dumped onto the Disgo and mounted on another system. It even comes with a handy key chain!

Use is simple; plug it into a USB port - either on a keyboard or the back of a PC - and it will appear as a usable volume on the computer where any form of data can be written or erased from it. Current capacities range from 8 to 128 meg, which would even replace a large ZIP disk. They're a little pricier than Digital Camera RAM or MP3 players, but robustness, functionality and ease of use outweigh this point.

One day the Disgo will be standard issue, but in the meantime they can be picked up at most high street retailers and online sellers.

Digital dreamL'espion





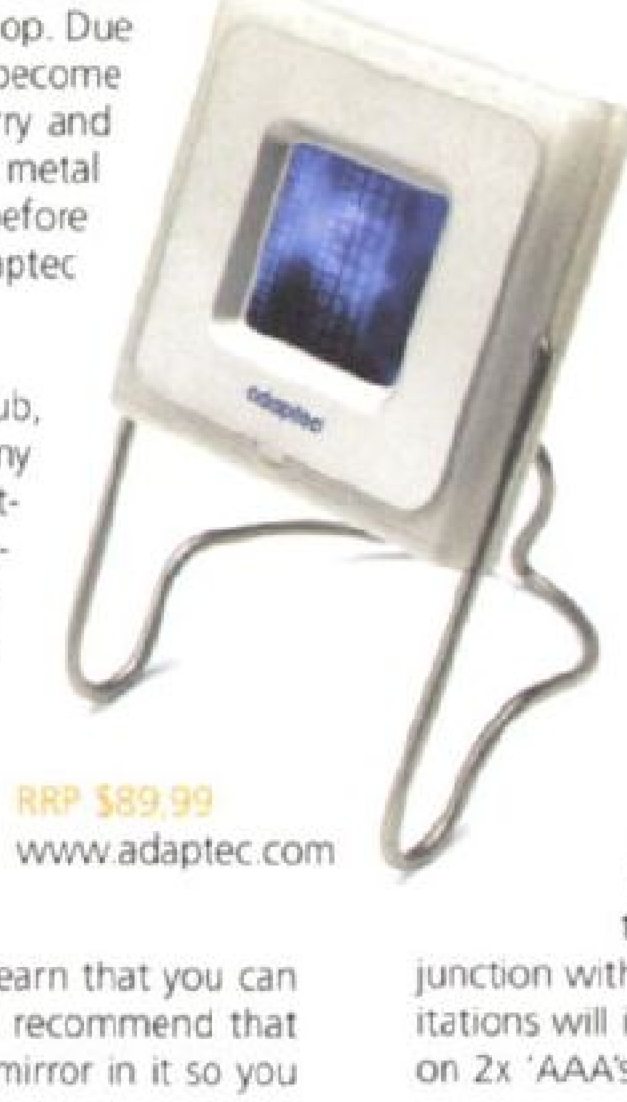
price: £39.95
www.digitaldreamco.com/shop/acatalog/

Ludicrously small, about the size of a matchbox, L'espion is like something you might get in a Christmas cracker. All silver and cheap plastic, yet it creates a kind of instant joy in those that get a glimpse of it, their eyes light up when they realise it's real, it's digital and that it just plugs into a USB. Stay cool, turn your collar up, walk away, think Bond, think microfilm, this is a camp spy camera and that's about the quality of picture you get. Even so you can take the still images straight into Photoshop, use continuous shoot mode as a web cam, time-lapse to create QuickTime movies and turn up the saturation and the contrast to the max to make some supreme pixel vision-type films. The currant version won't work with OSX and it doesn't do very well in low light, but you shouldn't be assessing this camera using the quality comparisons operated by the computer mags, no point, L'espion is cheap, proud and fantastic fun. Liberational, (or words to that effect).

Adaptec Xhub 4+

Whilst, most USB hubs look like an old modem, one thing in common is that they're all either business user black or look like the cheap plastic toys in your local $1 shop. Due to Apple's idiotic iMac colour policy, we have become experts at retinally filtering out revolting blueberry and sickly tangerine. With the advent of the polished metal phase last year, it was only a matter of time before peripherals companies followed suit: cue Adaptec Xhub+.

After checking out the specifications of the hub, which incidentally are pretty good, I turned my attentions to its design. The hub itself is an outsized throat lozenge sitting on a bent coat hanger that Adaptec refers to as a cable management system. Looking at the overall functionality it's obvious why it's there but really it's just another attempt to pretend that desktop clutter can be something else.



RRP $89.99
www.adaptec.com

Those of you who love to customise your computer desktop with favourite photos or Friday's comedy email image will be pleased to learn that you can put a 2x2 inch picture in the front of the hub. I recommend that anyone who buys one of these puts a compact mirror in it so you can either check for people creeping up behind you or you can just look at yourself all day when you're supposed to be working.

irock!

price: $29.99 www.myirock.com

The problem with encoding a vast CD collection into MP3 format is that they are then stuck on the computer for playback or downloaded in dribs and drabs onto an MP3 player as memory capacity will allow. If you're perched over a system all day then that's fine, but then trying to listen to your favourite track selection is limited to earshot. Then you are back to juggling CDs.

A better solution has come in the form of the iRock transmitter - a small, grey iMac styled FM unit than plugs into any stereo audio jack and broadcasts the feed to any FM radio with a 20 feet or so radius. The product would have been pointless when combined with a minidisk or cassette player but when paired with hard drive packed with tunes or a CD based MP3 player with 200 odd tracks then you instantly have your own mini radio station in your house.

Liberating such a large selection of possible tracks can create megalomaniacal urges when the possibilities of controlling a stereo FM broadcast sinks in. You will start to obsessively fine tune your track selections, consider recording intro banter, create scheduling times and ultimately start to crave for more power to extend your music taste to neighbours or the whole street. Other uses of the iRock is as a quick and reliable way to feed a MP3 player to a car radio or used in conjunction with an inexpensive portable FM radio headset. Two limitations will immediately hit you - the lack of a power jack (it runs on 2x 'AAA's) and the broadcast range.



300W Wireless Music Adaptor

If you are an MP3 aficionado and a compulsive hoarder, then the iRock is a must have piece of kit whether you're on a portable or a fixed server.

INVADER ZIM

Was America's best new animated series cancelled because nobody was watching? Or was it too dangerous for TV?

Mark Pilkington





The Official Zim site is at:
www.nick.com/all_nick/tv_supersites/zim/
Zim fan links:
www.expage.com/invaderzi links
OnlinePetition:
www.PetitionOnline.com/mod_perl/signed.cgi?izlovers&12301

On 17 January of this year, Nickelodeon network quietly announced the cancellation of its animated series Invader Zim, only a couple of episodes into its second season. The company claimed poor ratings, but Zim wasn't the only show to go, and rumour had it that Nick, as it likes chummily to refer to itself, was starting to feel the pinch of the economic downturn. Zim may not yet be a household name, and at only three feet tall, he may not be the most important member of his race - the status of an Irken is determined by its height - but, as anyone who has watched the show will know, these Earthenoid worms may just have messed with the wrong alien.

Spawned from the mind of Jhonen Vasquez, the twisted mind behind the antisocial comics Squee! and Johnny: The Homicidal Maniac, Zim has the body of an insectoid Bart Simpson with a penchant for B-movie hyperbole and the cackling, psychotic mind of South Park's Cartman. Naturally, he's found himself a screaming hoard of enthusiastic fans.

> "Zim keeps us kids off drugs."
> Zim fans 26039

His story is a straightforward one. Overseeing yet another intergalactic invasion wave, Zim's Irken superiors dispatch him to our galaxy, which they assume to be uninhabited, solely to keep him out of the way of Operation Impending Doom II. Zim had brought the previous Operation (Impending Doom I) to an abrupt end by wreaking havoc with a Giant Robot - unfortunately before he'd left his home planet. Arriving in 21st century America, Zim quickly builds a control centre, camouflaged as a suburban home, complete with Garden Gnomes and a robotic Ma and Pa. He himself takes on the guise of a (slightly green) Earth boy, while his dysfunctional robot GIR - hastily constructed form junk by Zim's superiors - looks ruff in an all-in-one dog suit. In order to better assimilate Earthen ways, Zim enrols as a junior in the local school while GIR holds the fort, eating ice cream, drink sodas and watching The Scary Monkey show on TV. It's at school that Zim encounters his nemesis, Dib, son of the famous kids' TV presenter and Mad Scientist, Professor Membrane. Obsessed with the paranormal thanks to TV's Mysterious Mysteries, Dib sees swiftly through Zim's disguise - Grey-style eye covers and a quiff - and vows to thwart his planned takeover of the planet.

So that's the setup, but the pleasure of Invader Zim is in the details. Vasquez and his team gleefully plunder pulp sci-fi convention, trashy consumer culture and post-X Files contemporary folklore to create an unsettlingly familiar, yet maniacally distorted version of 21st Century Americana. Highlight episodes include "Hamstergeddon", where the new class hamster, Peepee, ("Take a good look children, it will prepare for your adult lives in our nightmarish corporate system," says the hideous Miss Bitters as the eager hamster spins in his wheel) grows to Godzilla proportions as a result of Zim's intervention. Peepee chomps his way through the city, growing ever larger, while his overpowering cuteness leaves even hardened military generals unwilling to stop him.

In "Dark Harvest", fearing that the school nurse might notice his 'squiggly squooch' and unmask him as an alien, Zim turns organ snatcher, stealing other kids' innards and "replacing them with stuff" like TV remotes, teddy bears and mobile phones. Zim meanwhile, deciding that "more organs means more human", becomes a bloated Jabba the Hut, drooling intestines. He passes his physical with flying colours - "such plentiful organs!" squeals the nurse. Elsewhere Zim encounters Free Loving alien worshippers - "That's not an alien lifeform, he's an experimental aircraft"; the real Mallrats - feral kids who never left America's



cathedrals of consumerism; becomes a phantom social worker, the "Neighbourhood Baby Inspector", to check on a suspicious baby - who turns out to be another evil alien; learns that crop circles are made by rolling cows; creates roboreplicant parents for Parent-Teacher day; and generally learns to despise our ugly planet and its dumb occupants.

While the Simpsons and South Park have paved the way for such animated lampoonery, Zim feels different. Vasquez's depiction of America is genuinely alienated - it's Outcast Television, Acid TV of both sulphuric and lysergic varieties. This is no affectionate satire: Zim has teeth and fully intends to use them. That Vasquez's freaked-out vision may be a little too close to the bone was demonstrated in the week following the events of September 11th 2001, when the episode "FBI Warning of Doom" was pulled unannounced. On viewing the episode, not actually one of Zim's best, the only possible explanation can be the title, or, more worryingly, the show's distinctly un-American attitude.

"Zim is how I escape this stupid world!"

and 23126

Many have called Zim the new Ren & Stimpy, which also premiered on Nickelodeon, (and was effectively disembowelled by them after its huge cult success). Zim is certainly surreal, gross and, like that show, probably very good for you; but Ren & Stimpy 's world was entirely their own, intercepting scrambled transmissions from an alien America. Invader Zim's world, however, IS America - Zim, the alien, just sees it like it is, and so, it seems, do his ever-multiplying armies of fans. Less than a month after Nickelodeon pulled the plug on Zim, 35,000 people had signed an online petition demanding his return. Many called it the best show on TV. Their comments speak volumes:

"Zim opened up a world of art, music, and writing for meäit also stretched my imagination far into the boundaries of doominess and spookiness and cool stuff! I can't live without Zim!"

"Its sarcasm really characterizes the things I think in my head. My big brother likes it too and he is 20 and my neighbour watches it every week and he is 39."

Chances are that if Zim gets shown at all on UK terrestrial TV it will be dumped in the Twilight Zone of early morning kids weekend TV, whereas a late night slot would be far more appropriate. Meanwhile, if you're already a Zim fan, join the thousands writing to Nickelodeon boss Herb Scannell, calling for Zim's return.We all need more doomy goodness!

KUBRICK

http://64.26.15.120/kubrick/index.html

Kevin Williams

Lives in Plastic!



The Japanese web site for the KUBRICK product range offers a glimpse into the murky world of those addicted to collecting Japanese 'scratch build' kits. KUBRICK however are mass production versions of these lovingly created kits representing characters from film, anime and cartoons but in a scale that fits perfectly with the LEGO brand. The product name makes you think of a film director, but offers a stylised glimpse into the depth of adult toy collecting. Only the hardcore would want the complete 'Blair Witch Project' set.

The TRON set offers renditions of the films characters but also Light Cycles that actually fit the scale of the characters. These are not just cheap riders on the license (like some stupid LEGO representation of 'Harry Potter'), but are exact down to the smallest detail. The KUBRICK versions are stylised to suit the scale and the autonomy of the KUBRICK basic piece, a black and white coloured set including Disney characters such as 'Steam Boat 'Mickey Mouse add to the pastiche nature of the models.

Based on the LEGO human piece, there are a score of film characters, from the Planet of the Apes -old style, to the 'Planet of the Apes' - new style á la Tim Burton. Things start to get strange when wandering through the site and you come across the 'Reservoir Dogs' KUBRICK representation, video game 'Metal Gear Solid' characters, or a selection of 'Bruce Lee' KUBRICKS (just check out the Marvel Comic Heroes KUBRICKs)
http://64.26.15.120/kubrick/other/big/img_01dec_04_b.jpg

The idea that these characters could be used in some future animated extravaganza from the mind of the many LEGO filmmakers out there was not lost on this author. For those of you that left LEGO in the toy cupboard after working out how to squeeze zits, the ability to animate and record LEGO characters has been available since the explosion in camcorders.

The manufactures jumped on the bandwagon last year with the 'LEGO Studios' collection, supported by no other than Steven Spielberg himself. A series of sets that allow budding filmmakers to create film stages and then film them through a PC Camera and accompanying software. The quality achievable on this technology was initially trashed, but over recent months the quality has increased. No one looking at the Monty Python 'Holy Grail' LEGO rip can afford not to take them seriously.
www.lego.com/eng/studios/screening/movie.asp?title=montypython

hi-res media

ALLURE OF THE

Julian Weaver



Recycling of outdated technology is nothing new. In the audio field for example, the fetishising of analogue synthesizers and 1/4 Ampex is catered for by the ubiquitous retro-tech plug-in and the simulacra of its effects. Plug-ins like Red-Valve It and Magneto maintain and reinforce the kudos of pre-sampling electronic technologies that cannot physically satisfy the demands of the market. This drive for technological authenticity characterises the aggregation of a substantial portion of audio releases into a continuum of new retro.

Conversely, the rubbish heap of technology yet to gain fashionable status continues to grow. The market, focusing on old games consoles and ancient computers, has ignored the mass of hardware between the Magnabox and the Pentium III. But this heap is fast becoming the centre of attention for those looking to degauss the pull of the future perfect of the next upgrade with the Redundant Technology Initiative (http://www.lowtech.org) forming the vanguard of the rag and bone technology market.

Across the Atlantic, Thomas McIntosh (architect) and Emmanuel Madan (composer), formed [the User] and started re-using technology from this disregarded era in the somewhat grandly titled Symphony for Dot Matrix Printersl (1998/99). Anyone with an ear attuned to the creative potentials of noise is likely to have, at some point, listened to a dot matrix printer in action and considered its sonic output as potential sample material but [the User] took another route:

The symphony is comprised of a control master (the conductor), 12 PC slaves (evoking the tones of the western musical scale) and a custom serial network protocol. The range of printers contain microphones and cameras. A triptych of video projectors provide visuals of the selected feeds, which are switched by another printer using the print head moving across a contact strip on the drum to select the feed.

The symphony consists of the collective sonic output of the printers orchestrated through the master, which doles out the score in ASCII format. The scores are created on the basis of selecting those characters that elicit a specific sonic response from the print head on the drum. The absence of printer ribbon and paper ensure that the resulting sound is as audible as possible. As Emmanuel has pointed out elsewhere; there are "some printers that have a lot more bass to them some that are more in the treble register some that print extremely fast and some that do slower, more pounding types of rhythms. Then, within a single printer you have a fairly wide range of sounds."

The exclusion of representational output represents an attempt to focus the listeners attention on the printers mechanism rather than its ntended function. The removal of the vestiges of the printers output and the automated impact mechanics of the dot matrix align the instruments of the symphony more with the player piano or barrel organ than their ink- and bubble jet descendants.

Aside from the tuning up, the scraping that in the past had forced me to head towards the door after clicking the print button was completely attenuated. This, I suspected, was the product of some deft live

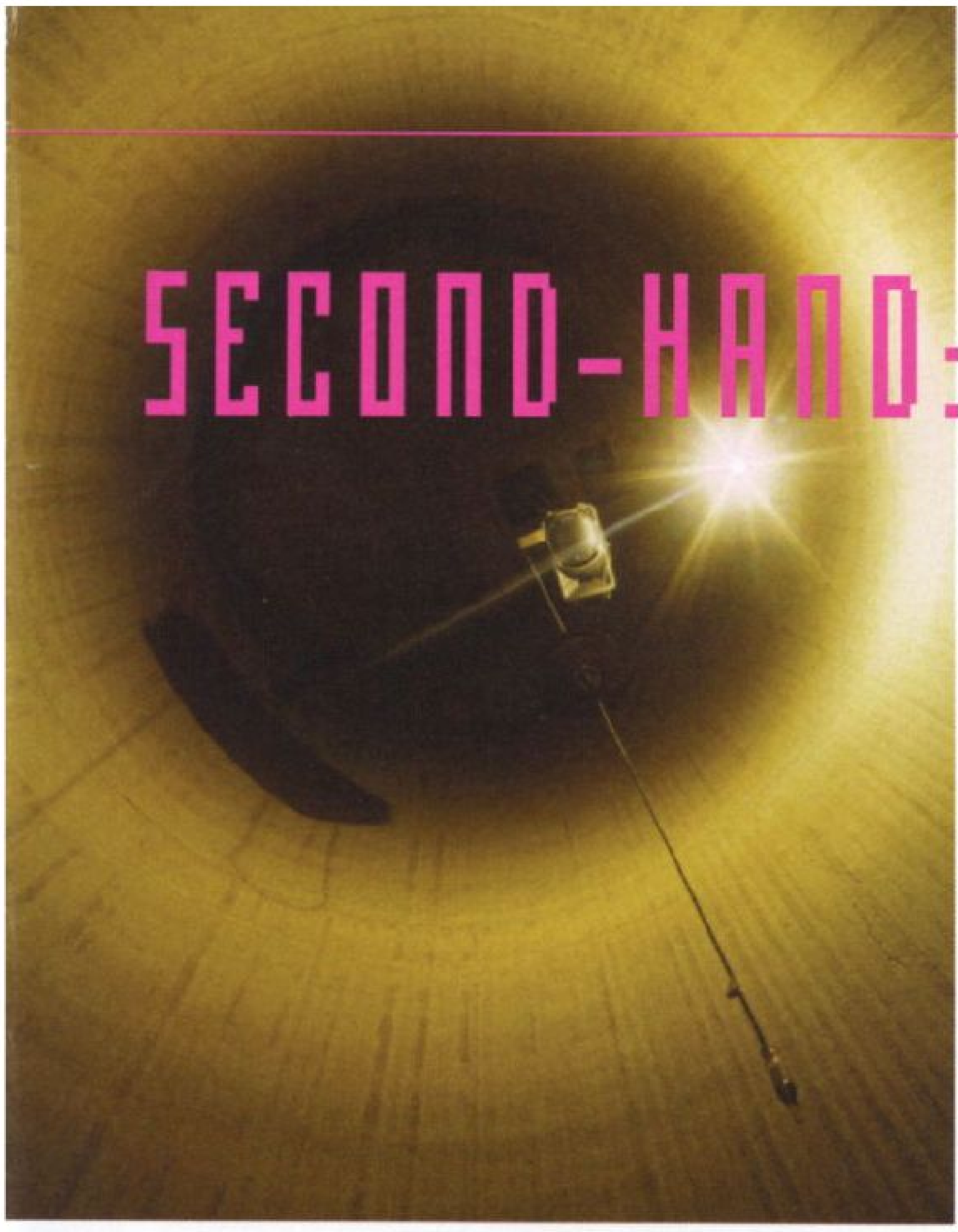


equalisation but turned out to be the selection of specific microphones for particular printers.

In line with its perceptibly structuralist ethos, the symphony evokes a giant print run in which the staccato qualities of the dot matrix produce an aural companion to Olivettis initial printer font design in addition to another kind of serialism. I just wish theyld called it sonata for de-papered printers.

Their ensuing project, Silophone [2000/2001], locates [the User]s programme firmly in the recycling business; this time in the form of a grain

SECOND-HAND: [THE USER]



elevator in the old port district of Montreal. The elevators construction dates back to the giddy heights of late modernist architecture and elicited praise from, amongst others, Le Corbusier. Silo #5B-1 was decommissioned in 1996 and was heading for the demolition queue until [the User] came across it.

Installed within the silo are a number of speakers and microphones. Via www.silophone.net, sound files are uploaded and played in the silo. The



playback is recorded and the server delivers the resulting sound via Real Audio approximately 40 seconds later. For those living locally, an installation outside of the silo provided similar access but with higher quality sound.

The structure, constructed entirely of reinforced concrete, is 200 metres long, 16 metres wide and approximately 45 metres at its highest point. The main section of the building is formed of approximately 115 vertical chambers, all 30 metres high and up to 8 metres in diameter. These tall parallel cylinders, whose form evokes the structure of an enormous organ, have exceptional acoustic properties: a stunning reverberation time of over 20 seconds. Anything played inside the Silo is euphonised, made beautiful, by the acoustics of the structure of the silo.

Euphony (from the Greek euphonos: sweet-voiced, musical), an attribute much admired in Hellenistic aesthetics, is generally perceived to be concerned with style. However a recent publication ("Euphony and Etymology: Aratus' Phaenomena" by Mary L. B. Pendergraft) expands this perception by attributing a connotation of "pleasing aural qualities" to the adjective lepto/s. In particular, it refers to Callimachusl (c305- c240 B.C.) use of the term as emblematic of a vocabulary of euphony and, through the process of demarcation, of cacophony.

It all begins to sound a little Platonic as [the User] articulate this euphonising quality separately from the sounds. With the silols acoustics reflecting onto every sound submitted to it, is it by euphony that sounds are made beautiful? To test their claim, I uploaded the most 'ugly noise' to hand. As you will no doubt object, this is difficult to achieve as you can't be the arbiter of taste for everybody but the prospect of further bedecking Whitehouses Princess Disease was intriguing.

On playback, after the soundls trip through the interior of the silo, it had lost much of its granularity and appeared to have been stripped, made finer, and then saturated in the reverberation. The reduction to a purer or finer form and subsequent polishing, revealed through the chambers, brings us both towards and away from the aletheia of the silo. [the User] reveal the silos interior to us by but can only accomplish this through recording its alteration. The euphonising quality of the silo is literally the echo of its obsolescence, the reiteration of the stripping away of its function. This also occurs with the Symphony but with Silophone it is all about sustain.

The sonic sustain also pre-echoes the last post and the project is an attempt to raise popular awareness of the building and to catalyse activity that will eventually result in the discovery of an appropriate new function for the abandoned elevator. The silos place in Montreals economic and cultural makeup as well as the structurels historical position within architectural development is critical to the project insofar as a building is the physical embodiment of its past; to demolish it is to erase that past.

The adoption of heritage and promotion of conservation appears partly to be a consequence of the grip that the silo holds over its visitors; who cares about a building that provokes no response in them? Thomas became enamoured by the silo whilst writing his thesis and all those who have entered have found it an overwhelming and unforgettable experience.

Returning momentarily to euphony, etymologically, lepto/s is derived from lambanein (to take or seize) but also conversely leptikos (a disposal to take or accept). [the User], taken over or seized by the silo and their reciprocal seizure of its interior; combine the opposing meanings of lepto/s. into the suffix - lepsy. The realisation of new uses for an abandoned object, simply put, is recycling. Their work to date; the sustain of Silophone and the staccato of the Symphony; we could call it recyclepsy.

Mp3 and Real Audio extracts from the Symphony for Dot Matrix Printers are available from [the User] website at www.sat.qc.ca/the_user/ www.sat.qc.ca/the_user/ and Silophone is online at www.silophone.net.

MAPPALUJO

Michael Prochak

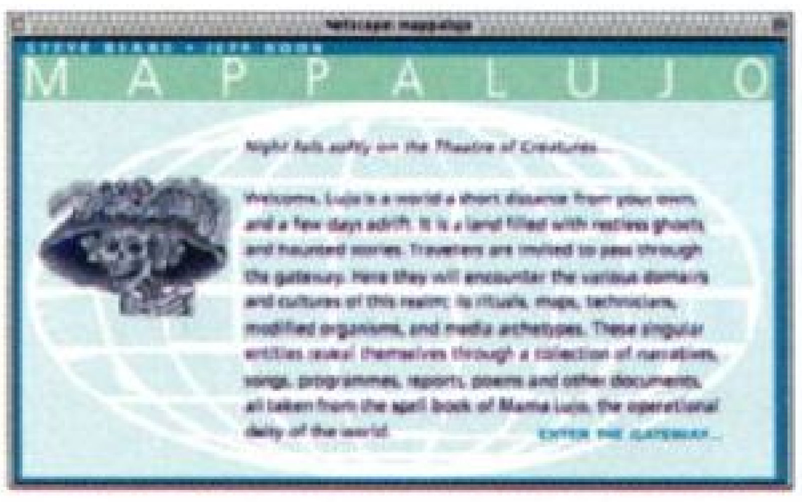
Although there seems to be a preponderance of literary sites springing up on the web, the jury is still out as to whether or not cyberspace is an appropriate medium for the printed word. In recent years weíve had offerings from established authors like Stephen King, we've had the hype about the future of e-books, we've had some semi-interesting experimentation, but mostly, weíve had a plethora of rather self-indulgent mediocrity which, in the past, would have simply been consigned to the seedy world of vanity publishing. It seems in literature, as in music, technology can become a curse. And when it's so easy to produce and disseminate literary work, on the web, most people appear to be forgetting to ask themselves why they're producing it in the first place.

When it comes to experimentation, literature has a stronger tradition than most. So when web-based authors enter the bookish arena, they're already up against the genius of Joyce, the alternative endings of Fowles, the cut-up tradition of the beat poets, the twisted realities of Burroughs and the alternate worlds of Robert Anton Wilson. And thatís just scratching the surface. Given the power and tradition of literature and the potential for democratisation offered by the Internet, on-line authors clearly have an awesome responsibility to create something innovative and worthy of being read.

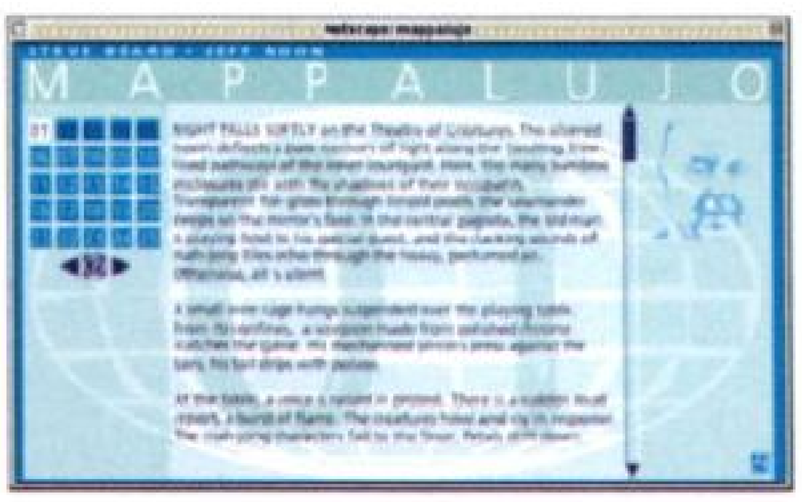
Steve Beard and Jeff Noon have accepted that responsibility and have created a web-based writing game called Mappalujo. The site is fairly slick and the game allows two or more writers to jointly compose a narrative consisting of an agreed number of chapters. Players write chapters in turn, according to certain principles, with each completed chapter being sent to the next player in the sequence. This writer then produces a chapter of their own, based in some way on the piece just received. This process of action and reaction continues until the agreed number of chapters is completed. The game is played on a grid system, or map, with each separate region corresponding to a chapter in the narrative. The grid is numbered from top left to bottom right, along the horizontal axis. Therefore, the first chapter of the project occupies the top left square of the grid, and the last chapter occupies the bottom right square of the grid. There are always an odd number of chapters. The shortest game is played on a square grid of sides 3x3, making a total of nine chapters. Games can also be played on a 5x5 grid (25 chapters) or a 7x7 grid (49 chapters). Although larger grids can be used, the creators felt that 49 chapters represent the reasonable limits of the game.

Each narrative produced by the game is set in the imaginary land of Lujo. Gradually, as more narratives are added, the map of Lujo is extended, and further explored. A character known as Mama Lujo apparently appears in each narrative or, at least, is mentioned or referred to symbolically. Mama Lujo is the operational deity of the game, a kind of voodoo princess or shaman, who tends to the game as it is played. In practice, player A composes 12 chapters, and player B 12 chapters. One chapter is composed by both players together, making the total of 25 chapters

Individual chapters may be up to three pages in length. A period of seven days is allowed for the creation and transmission of each chapter. Chapters are exchanged without comment, and without judgment being passed. This is to allow a more spontaneous expression. The central square is the fulcrum of the whole structure, the place where many stories meet and pass through each other. The writers will take into account the importance of this square when they jointly compose chapter 13. Each chapter is an entity in itself, in the sense that it should work as a stand-alone piece. However, at the same time, the writers are supposed to remain sensitive to any overall narrative elements that the process brings into existence. As the work progresses, this narrative is supposed to be attended to, according to the individual desires of each writer. Each chapter is further governed by certain guiding principles, different for every chapter. These are generated by reference to various iconic figures or 'ghosts'. These 'ghosts' are symbolic of 25 different people or objects and in most cases, are representative of real people or objects... for instance Andy Warhol, Barbara Cartland or something like the National Enquirer These 25 ghosts are chosen by the mutual agreement of both writers at the beginning of the process.







The rules get quite intricate and players can use jokers, pastiche and other elements in the creation of the narrative. The creators say that Mappalujo is a work that moves between various genres and methodologies and that rather than forcing the work down a certain limiting pathway, the writers will attempt to remain truthful to the work's nature. However, considering the 5 finished chapters currently on the site, Mappalujo is a prime example of process over content. As a game, it has a certain interest, although in many respects, the intricate rules and process have made it far too easy to avoid having a decent original idea. As a work of fiction, the result so far is just another thin, tired, watery William Gibson cyberpunk wannabe that simply doesn't engage the imagination.

To be fair, this is a site that should be watched to see just what does ultimately develop. Five chapters is not a completed game. Perhaps it will eventually engage the reader as a literary text, or, perhaps it will wander aimlessly as a game of shadows, of echoes, rather than the more usual and obvious linkages. Personally, I think writers should always ask themselves what's the reason behind the process...what are you trying to say and what should the reader be left with? If they can't answer that, they risk simply adding another layer of verbose wallpaper to a room that's been redecorated far too many times already. In the mean time, you can find a lot more interesting and engaging content and style in the likes of Greg Egan, Neil Gaiman, Alessandro Baricco, Umberto Eco and even Tom Robbins. They hide their literary efforts in things called books.

EXTREME BEAUTY IN NYC

Nicol Cseko

Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art chronicles the ways in which fashion, through the ages, has cloaked, covered, displayed, and transformed the human body. Focusing on five areas: the neck, bust, waist, hips, and feet, Harold Koda, the exhibit's curator has brought together both historical and contemporary designs.

The exhibit begins with the neck and shoulders. On the walls are menacing x-rays of Ndebele and Padoung women whose shoulders are pushed down from the weight of metal neck coils. A metal-framed lace neck ruff of 16th century origin is shown by paintings and in a display case. Not to be outdone, modern variations include bejeweled neck corsets and what seems to be an oversize neck ruff by junta wannabe. Far from just framing the face, the ruff has grown to disguise the entire body of the wearer.

Next the attention turns to the bust. It is the bust that has fallen prey to the most capricious whims of fashions. From the shapeless flapper of the 20's to Madonna's famous conical bra, not a single variation seems to have escaped attention. Breasts are pushed up by Japanese obis, pushed down into a Gibson girl mono-bosom or encased in molded leather complete with nipples by Tom Ford. Even the humble push up bra is shown in its metamorphosis form 1950's sweater girl styles to modern silicon and foam padded wonder bras.

The focus on the waist and hips yields some of the most noteworthy pieces in the collection. Here historical and ethnic examples are best juxtaposed with late 20th century designs. The beaded corsets of male Dinka warriors are featured next to the designs of John Galliano that they inspired. In an interesting twist Galliano takes a symbol of masculinity among the Dinka and places it on provocative, feminine dresses.

Thierry Mugler on the other hand takes the clumsy and heavy armor of European knights to create a futuristic chrome and plastic android suit. Mugler isn't interested in protecting the body. His clear plastic panels are placed to best show off the face, breasts, and belly of woman. A silver body cast designed by Alexander McQueen exaggerates and gives shapes to the breasts in much the same way as the metal codpieces and South American penis sheaths.

Historical continuity is also best represented by the display of corsets. Various historical styles are offered as a point of reference. Men are not spared either. And entire display is devoted to the dandy's dressing ritual. Etching of male corsets and examples of waist cinchers and padded breeches prove that men are just as like likely to use fashion to augment their natural bodies. Most impressive is modern 17" corset made and worn by Mr. Pearl that gives the s-curve waist in vogue at the turn of the century.

For foot fetishes, its in the shoe selection that the most diverse influences are found. The dainty shoes made for bound feet are featured with modern Lucite sandals. Vivienne Westwood's platforms shoes and as big black platform Buffalo sneakers are dwarfed by 16th century Italian chopines reaching up to 20 inches high. 1960's silk evening pumps evoke the pointed toe of Croatian slippers. In all their various guises, the garments shown in the exhibit are clearly united by a common purpose: to accentuate, define, and disguise that is to transform the individual. Such goals are shown as being neither unique to a certain people nor rooted in a specific timeframe by the variety of example on exhibit.

Critique

However, there is far too much focus on contemporary designers, especially form haute couture. Where as the historical examples, such as corsets, were worn by wider segment of the population, the contemporary pieces are affordable to a very few, at best. The gowns of Mugler and Galliano for example were produced for a single showing on the catwalk. This undermines the premise that fashion is used to this day to transform the wearer. Inclusion of more mundane attire like bras or control slip would have widened the range of the exhibit considerably and the more radical elements of street and various sub cultures were totally ignored where they should have certianly have been represented. As an exhibit on the extremes of fashion Mr. Koda has done an admirable job and has excelled at gathering some of the finest contemporary designers into one place but there are far more areas that need to be explored.



BODY WORLDS

at the Atlantis Gallery



An erie sense of deja-vu will hit by anyone who has seen the German horror 'Anatomy' when they visit this exhibition at the Atlantis Gallery on London's Brick Lane. In the film a young woman on a scholarship to a prestigious Anatomy college discovers a sinister cult that is using live subjects and plastinising them for anatomical display.

While the anatomy figures in the film are all cleverly designed models, 25 whole-body real plastisied bodies can be seen at the London leg of touring Body Worlds spectacle. The controversial 'horror show' exhibition displays anatomical and whole body specimens preserved with a unique and laborious technique called plastination, invented by the creator of the exhibition, Prof. Gunther von Hagens and which is nothing like the fictional one shot injection process in the film.



There are in fact several different processes involved for plastination depending on the subject size type be it whole organs, body slices etc, but effectively procedure works by exchanging all the fluid in the body's tissue with a form of silicon rubber. The dry and odourless results achieved are a vast improvement over previous preservation techinque that left smelly and soggy specimens that needed to remain in bottles until examined.

Once the body or organs have been plastisised they can displayed as is or in the case of the exhibition, whole bodies can be manipulated into complex and Dali-esque stances which offer truely unique ways to look at the body. Several different views of the body are forms of 'exploded views' which are fine for car repair manuals but very unsettling when viewed on people.

To date eight million people have visited the exhibition since it was presented for the first time in Japan in 1995. Interestingly the surveys conducted in cities demonstrates the educational value of the specimens with 80% of the visitors say they know more about the human body after their visit and fifty per cent leave the exhibition resolved to pay more attention to their physical health. Even six months after the exhibition 10% of the visitors are still smoking less or have quit smoking altogether.

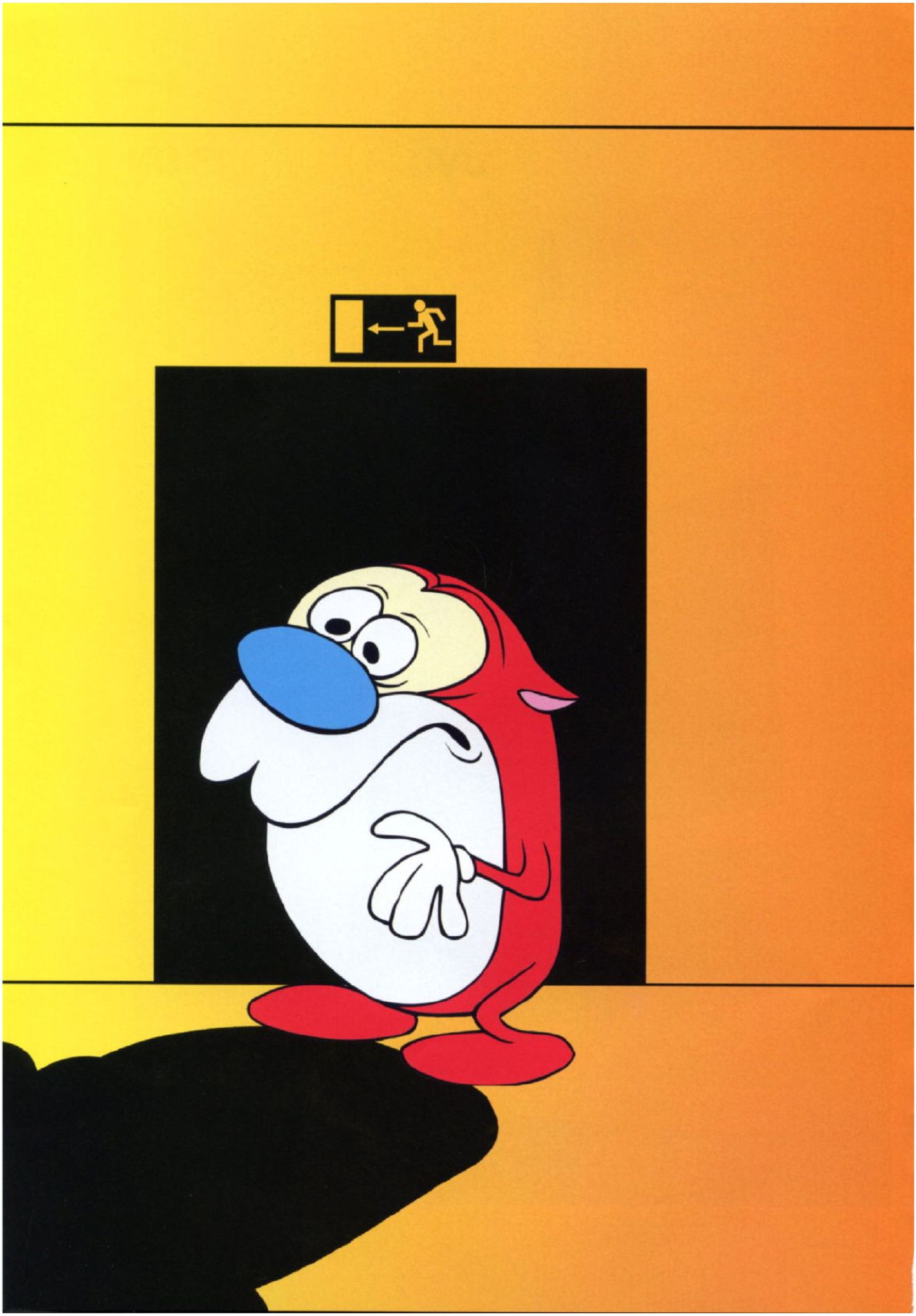






www.bodyworlds.com. free literature and posters can be requested from: exhibition@plastination.com.


JVC FUTUREVISION
AN EXPRESSION OF TIME TO COME
42" (106CM) PLASMA WIDESCREEN TV AV-42PD20ES
106cm (42") Plasma Widescreen TV with DigiPure Pro – 3D Surround System
2 x Oblique Cone Speakers plus Subwoofer – Front L/R: 15 x 2 Subwoofer: 40W
Super Slim Floor Standing Design – Natural Scan Widescreen Plus Auto Panoramic
Twin Picture (Single Tuner) – Picture & Text
19.9cm



LIFE AFTER STIMPY

Once upon a time in a land far far away the only time to watch cartoons was on Saturday mornings. But then came along a new cable channel that promised cartoons all day long and not just after school had finished. And so they had to fill the schedule with everything they could find that was animated in any way from vintage black and white risqué Betty Boop to countless reruns of Bugs Bunny. As success started bringing in more Ad revenue they decided to commission their own original animation.

Enter stage right a young John K with two shows - one based on an idiot boy named Jimmy and another with a classic pairing of a cat and a dog. Yet the company wanted to own the entire show outright so John parted with his 2nd league idea of the cat and dog show.

Ren & Stimpy became a massive hit with both young and old alike with a daring and manic animation style mixed with a lot of gags based on icky bodily functions. The psychotic duo shocked the entire animation world. Nothing remotely comparable to it had been seen since The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse where John had first started out.

But as the show became more popular so did John, and he got more and more media attention - this did not suit the powers that be. Some of us happened to notice that the show turned to utter rubbish mid season while John K was nowhere to be found... ... yet strangely there were countless new shows poping up that had a suspiciously similar style.....

Now, in an age when Rupert Murdoch's international media empire is propped up by reruns of The Simpsons and several satellite channels exist to broadcast cartoons 24/7, Black Ice goes back to the source to find out what actually happend with John K and Ren and Stimpy and what the great man is up to now.



BI: What was your first exposure of developing programs for US networks?

JK: Ralph Bakshi and I developed three original series over one summer with the intent of selling them to the three main American networks - NBC, CBS and ABC and he managed to get development deals from all three of them. They gave us money to come up with stuff. So we did, and then when he went in to pitch them all, the show concepts, it turned out they never had any intention of buying any of them. I guess each one was trying to tie-up the properties so someone else wouldn't buy them. This is what Ralph has told me 'cause I wasn't there. By the time he got to the last meeting, that was at CBS, they took one of the story bibles for one of the cartoons we'd developed - it was called Bobby's Girl, they just kind of threw it on the table and said "Well, Ralph, we're not gonna buy them", and I guess he blew up, started screaming at them, which is kind of a scary thing if you know Ralph, 'cos he's six foot three, almost 300 pounds, huge guy with a perfect aim, he's really strong. I've seen him throw desks and stuff. When he explodes, it's a pretty amazing spectacle. So there's all these executives sitting around a table, and they've never seen anything like this before. They're all cowering and Ralph starts accusing them of trying to tie up the properties and that they never had any intention of buying anything in the first place. Finally the main executive, who I guess wasn't scared and I guess admiring Ralph, Judy Price looked at him and said, "Woah, Ralph, calm down a second., It's not as though we wouldn't want to buy this, we all think it's great. It's just that no network in its right mind today would buy a show that's untested. That's why everything we do is based on a toy, or based on an old cartoon, which we call 'Marquee Value", you know like the New Adventures of Bugs Bunny or The New Adventures of Scooby Doo, so if you had something like that, something people had heard of before, something that had Marquee Value then we'd buy it off you." Ralph says, he starts spluttering "Marquee value? Fuckin' Marquee value? You want goddamn Marquee value I'll give you marquee value", and they all look up at him terrified "What have you got Ralph?", and Ralph goes "Fffff...ffff..ff..Mighty Mouse!" And they all say "Okay we'll take it." And he ran out of there, ran to the studio, went up to his partner John Hythe and said "Quick, find out who the fuck owns Mighty Mouse". And they did, they called around, found out that Viacom owned it and got the rights to it. Within a week we'd written almost all the stories, certainly the premises for all the stories. Got Judy back, pitched it to her and she bought the show.

BI: Do you think that Hollywood, or TV networks, commission creative people to do stuff knowing full well that they're not going to take them but that way they've tied them up timewise or sucked the ideas out of their brains?

JK: It's never happened tome, but I never went to any of those network meetings. This is what Ralph told me but it did seem pretty weird that they'd all commissioned the development of these shows and didn't pick them up because some of them were really funny and would have made great shows.

BI: So are those ideas now in a vault with the networks somewhere?

JK: No, the rights reverted back to Ralph. The buying season is only a month or two long. This was ten years ago, when the animation business was a lot different. Now we have cable networks and they don't have 'Saturday morning cartoons', they can run cartoons anytime of the day. Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon have completely changed the whole business. Back in those days, the 60s to the 80s - there were only three networks and they all had their cartoons on Saturday mornings and that was it.

BI: Did Mighty Mouse help you get Ren and Stimpy made, and was that the only thing you were pitching at the time?

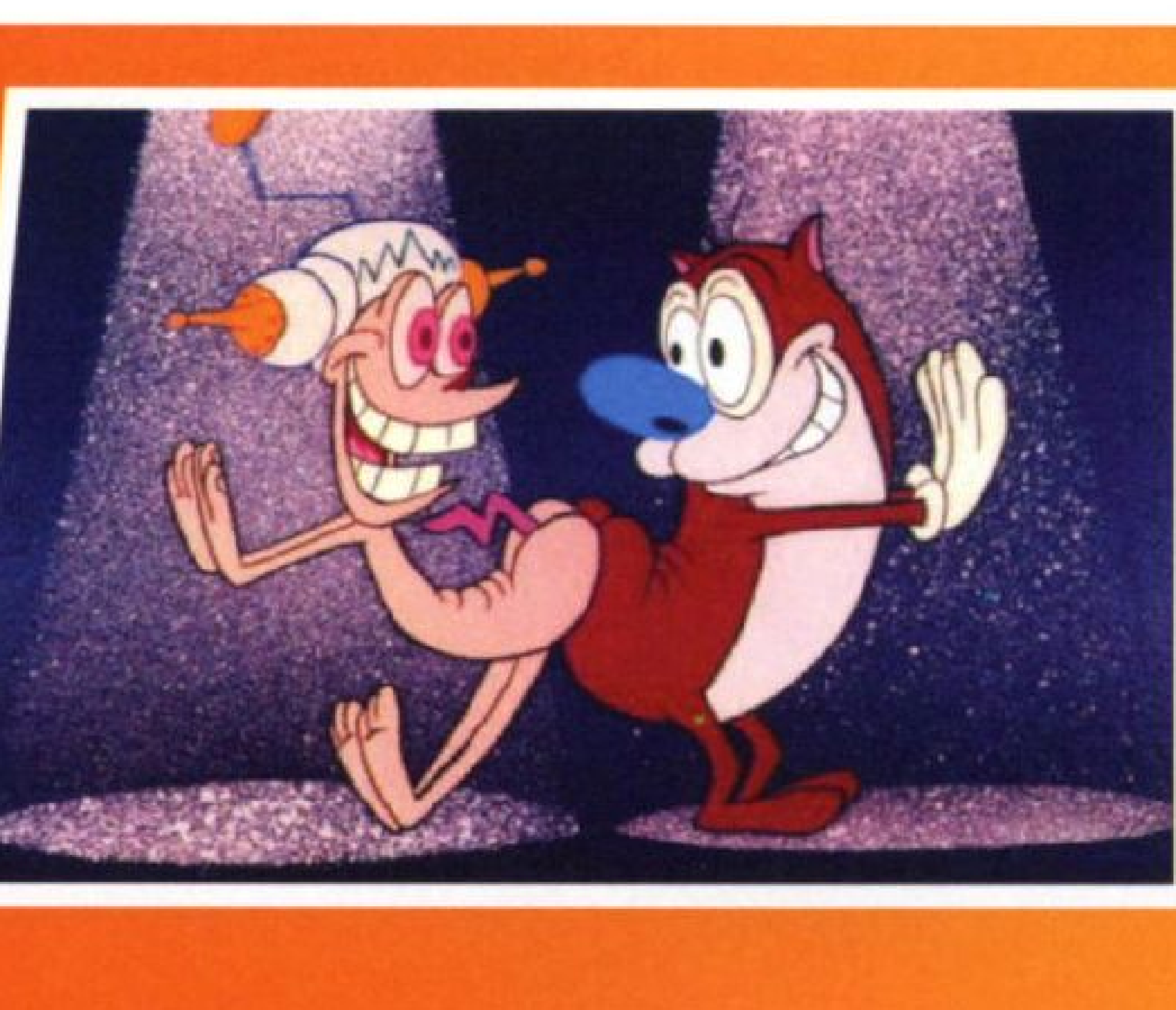
JK: I don't think Might Mouse helped me get Ren and Stimpy outside of giving me some confidence after having some practice working on cartoons. I don't think the networks were that impressed with it. They thought it was weird. It was two years later that I met up with Nickelodeon. But I had pitched all my shows to the networks, I think before and after Mighty Mouse, and they all thought I was crazy. They wanted to call the security guards 'cos I'd start acting up like the cartoon characters in the stories. I'd jump on the desks and knock things over and roll around on the floor and stuff and they'd never seen anything like that. They thought it was weird, mind you the stories were pretty weird compared to what they were used to. Nobody bought anything 'til Nickelodeon came along, who said they wanted something weird, something that you couldn't recognise as a Saturday Morning cartoon. I said "Well, I guess I must have that, 'cos I got thrown out of every other network." So I pitched them about five different shows. They picked two of them, Ren and Stimpy and Jimmy The Idiot Boy.

BI: At that point what happened with Jimmy the Idiot Boy? Did you get tied up with Ren and Stimpy and didn't have time?

JK: Being kind of naive I thought they would just license the shows from me. But when the contracts came, it turned out they wanted me to give the shows to them. They would own them! I would get to work on them, but they would own them. So I thought "Well, I've got to do something, or I'll never get a chance," so I sold them one and I sold them Ren and Stimpy and hung onto Jimmy.

BI: You mentioned rolling around on the floor. Do you get into the characters and pull facial expressions? Is there some method acting?

JK: I don't practice it, I just do it. If I know what the jokes are and what the stories are. I always know what their personalities are, there's no problem acting them. You see pictures of animators looking in mirrors in books and magazines and stuff, but 99 percent of all animators use the same three expressions over and over again. They don't have to look in the mirror, they just memorise their stock library of ideas and expressions. It's actually a good idea to look in the mirror but what animators tend to do is they look in the mirror and they make an animation expression with their face. What I did with Ren and Stimpy was encourage everyone not to do that, but to make real expressions - to make human expressions, not cartoon expressions- and then try to caricature the human expressions and then wrap them around the cartoon characters form, which is completely different. No-one had done that



since, Jesus, since the 1940s, and really only two people I know of ever did that and that was Chuck Jones and Bob Clampett. The expressions in a Walt Disney cartoon - ancient and new - are completely vacuous, they mean nothing. They have their happy expression, their said expression, their mad expression, and one other expression and that's the falling in love expression where one side of your face, you just smirk on one side of your face. They started that on Jungle Book, they had Mowgli do that, and since then every time someone falls in love they have that same one expression. But you never see human expressions, you hardly ever see human expressions in cartoons, you see cartoon expressions. They're drawn on model sheets. Someone places them on model sheets, they either create them or copy them from another cartoon, put them on model sheets and for the rest of the life of the character, that's it: that's the only expressions they get.

BI:How long did you last on the Ren & Stimpy and what exactly happened? There are so many conflicting stories out there. It turned into utter crap after you seemingly left.

JK: Basically they just stopped paying us. Some time in the second season it dawned on them that they had something that was very successful but I was getting all this publicity for it. Somebody didn't like that and decided they just wanted to own it all themselves. So they started to talk with some of the key people with me behind my back and got them to consent to go with them as they took it over and raise their salaries. So that's what happened: they stopped paying us, we ran out of money, I had to start laying people off and then found out that two of the guys had basically defected and said they would start a studio for them. Then they went around, trying to recruit people from our studio. But the rest of the key people decided not to do it, and they did manage to get some of the junior people.

BI: Is there a real Stimpy or Stimpy-like person in the real world or at SpumCo?



JK: It's probably a conglomerate of every dumb guy I've ever known. Ren is basically ripped off of Peter Lorre, then I throw in parts of me and people I know. There's not one personality. Most characters kind of start off as a fairly general personality but then the more you work with them, and if you allow them to grow, you add personality traits to them and they become richer. So they no longer are easily definable, but you know them inside. You know how to draw them and how to act them but maybe you can't explain exactly what their personality is except in the simplest terms, like Ren's an asshole, right? But he's not just an asshole, he's a psychotic asshole, and there's a lot more shades to him than that.

BI: Do you have anyone identify with the characters?

JK: Sure, I don't think anybody would admit identifying with Stimpy. But lots of people say they identify with Ren. For some reason, it's okay to be an asshole but nobody wants to admit they're stupid. My girlfriend totally identified with Ren, she fell in love with Ren. Used to write me letters...

BI: As Ren?

JK: Not exactly, but I wrote her one as Ren, filled with lust and stuff, and then we met and fell in love and that was it.

BI: I've built up goof friendships around whether people pass the Ren and Stimpy acid test. Some click with it immediately. Any comments?

JK: It wasn't meant to be anything like that. That's the funny part. It was only meant to be a silly cartoon, just to give people some laughs. But surprisingly it became a cult with college kids. I really meant it for kids. I just wanted to put stuff in there that kids were not allowed to have in other Saturday morning cartoons.

BI: Was it marooned on Saturday morning, or was it moved around?

JK: Every network that runs it thinks of it as for a different age group. Like, its running on Teletoon now, and every now and then when I come into Canada, the show that I'm doing now for Teletoon and for Fox Kids and that's also meant to be a kids show just like Ren and Stimpy was. Sometimes when they tell me you can't do that because it's too much for kids, I say "But you run Ren And Stimpy on your channel", they say "Yeah but that's an adult show, we have that on at midnight" I say "No, you should have that on Sunday mornings at 11 o'clock. During church!" If it's good enough for Jesus, then you can run this joke with our new show. To run it at midnight

"Some time in the second season it dawned on them that they had something that was very successful but I was getting all this publicity for it"

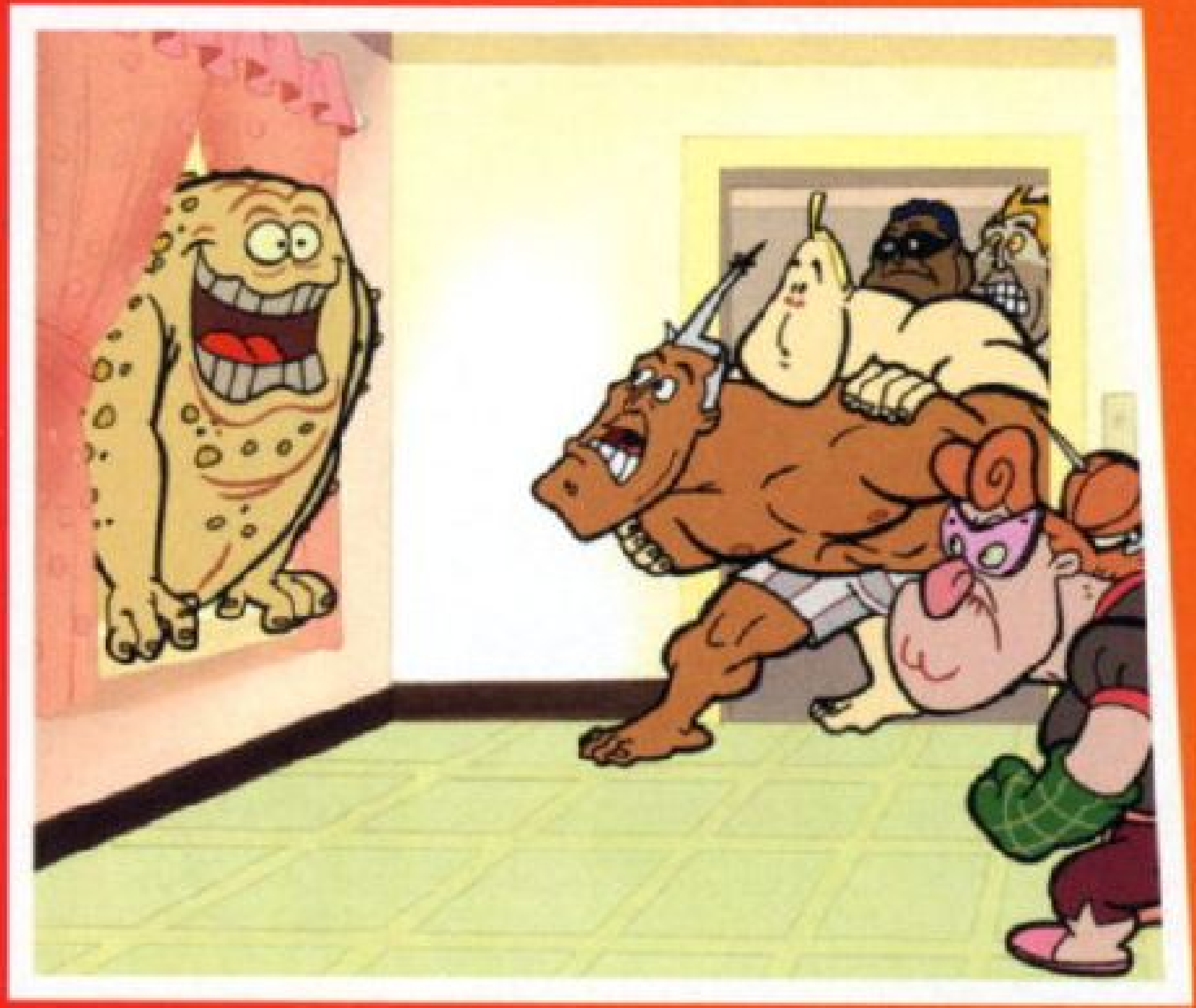
makes no sense to me. It's totally a kids show, it's about farts and boogers and stuff. That's the stuff that little kids like. I mean there's stuff in there I can see parents going for 'cos its nostalgic like the fake cereal commercials and thing s like that, and all the emotional stuff between Ren and Stimpy, I can see al the gay couples getting into that.

BI: Ren and Stimpy was groundbreaking for the Saturday morning slot. What have you thought of your influences with Ren and Stimpy?

JK: In the abstract I probably would be proud of it, but I just wish I got a damn cut of it for every show that's an imitation of it or has benefited from it. There's a million of them. It's flattering, but the money is more flattering.

BI: How did you discover the net, switching in to the birth of Spumco.com, as it were?

JK: It was during Ren and Stimpy. Some people were talking about the internet, and I didn't know what the hell they were talking about. They were talking about newsgroups and I just thought, "What the hell are you people talking about?" Someone invited me to their house and they had all these printouts coming out of their printer. It was like the old kind, you know with all the holes in the paper and stuff rather like teleprint (dot matrix). It had all these people talking about Ren and Stimpy from the Ren and Stimpy newsgroup, and I thought "Wow this is weird. What the heck is this. Maybe it's the future, finally." That's all I thought about it for a while then a year or two later somebody else had written an article on Ren And Stimpy for a magazine. This woman was a big fan and she started telling me about the World Wide Web. I said "What's that?" She said, "That's part of the internet." I couldn't quite figure out what the difference was. Then I got a call from someone at AOL, who was interested in us creating content for them, on the world wide web. I said "I don't know what you're talking about." He said "I know what. I'll just set you up with AOL and you can kind of check it out." So he did and I just went up to the web. And AOL's kind of limited compared to the whole of the web. I didn't know that, it was too complicated for me at the time. But I did manage to go on to the web and see all of a sudden pictures and stuff. Right there when I just saw that, I saw the future. I thought "Oh, this is what's gonna save us all. Everyone sharing information of every type of media, so eventually we'll just be able to make our own cartoons and sell them directly to the public or directly to a sponsor and just put them on air without having to go through networks, without having to go through complicated distribution systems. You don't have to go through giant monopolies and have everybody tell you what to do and then steal your product. It would have been 1991 when I first discovered newsgroups, so it was 1993 for this. I had ideas for animated gifs with sound and stuff but you couldn't do it yet. And about three years later we were approached by Microsoft to make some content for some site they had. We did that. We made a deal with them and we created Weekend Pussyhunt. We started making this serialized movie that would run three times a week or something. That's where we learned about Flash, although they didn't know much about Flash themselves. They just knew it existed and they told us about it. Then they had a guy that was supposedly going



to show us how to use it, but I was already way ahead of him because as soon as I saw it, as soon as he showed me something in Flash, I saw all the possibilities instantly. He was telling us "you can do this, you can do that, but you can't do this and you can't do dialogue." And I already figured out in my head "Oh yeah, you can do dialogue. I know how to do dialogue with this." But I didn't really know how to use the programme. And by some miracle, a girl came into the studio about a day later, I think her name was Ann Marie, I don't know her last name but she's married now so she's Ann-Marie McCardie, she knew Flash. She'd worked on a couple of projects, and she was a huge fan of SpumCo, she was dying to work for us. I guess she'd come in before and tried to talk about Flash but nobody knew what she was talking about, and I hadn't met her or anything. But we met, started talking about it, I instantly hired her, and right away we basically invented what you can do with Flash because everything in the manual said you couldn't do it. It was made to do animated logos and banners and things that jerk around or whatever. But we just saw it and said what the hell, let's make cartoons with it. We can do it. So we started the Weekends Pussyhunt for Microsoft, and at the same time on our own we started the George Liquor Program. This was end of 96, I think 97 when it first came out. The first couple were primitive but the more we learned, they started to get smoother and smoother and we figured out how to do the dialogue and we started adding music and by the end of last year when we were doing Flash I had a team of about 30 people. We had trained them over a summer to be really good animators, which in normal animation terms would take years. But we were doing stuff that was super smooth, we just figured out this great system to use Flash. And then the whole thing collapsed, so we had to lay everybody off. Now the Flash is kind of dead for the time being, but I know it's going to come back and it may not end up being Flash, that's not really the point, but it was the first medium that allowed you to make convincing entertainment on the Web.

BI: So there's this library of the George Liquor Show and Weekend Pussyhunt that's on a hard-drive somewhere that's not being viewed by anyone?

JK: It's not exactly vast. You probably have about 30 cartoons or something.

BI: I'm waiting to find a quick and easy way to convert Flash animation into a usable CD or VD player or something.

JK: You can do that. It's easy. But there's limitations with Flash that you wouldn't want to translate into the other medium. If you make cartoon for the web first you're going to build in disadvantages. Like you can't have fully realised backgrounds - rendered, painted backgrounds - because they would have to be Bitmaps, where as Flash is a vector-based programme. You can do it, you can bring in Bitmaps, but the download time on a Bitmap is -like - forever. And it doesn't look very good in Flash, either, it's all pixellated-looking and kind of chunky and it would just make the file way too big, but the there are people making whole cartoons, making half-hour cartoons in Flash for television now. You can use it and its fine, if you're not too worried about how it's going to play over the internet. You just make it for television, you can do it.

BI: I was just thinking it would-be nice to have the cartoons you already have with a format you can just dump them into.

JK: We're talking to a Home Video company about releasing Weekend Pussyhunt, probably on a VD format. We're working with them right now on the Ripping Friends, so that's probably our next project.

BI: What's your favourite food? Is it steak, or is that just for interviews?

JK: I don't think I have one favourite food. But meat is definitely one of them.

BI:Your own record as ranting about Tiny Toons.

JK: I felt they took the worst elements of Mighty Mouse. They also took a lot of Warner Bros. stuff. They combined the original Loony Toons jokes with the jokes in Mighty Mouse and added typical cartoon writer stuff to it. It's not my sort of thing.

BI: Can you describe your new series Ripping Friends in a nutshell?

JK: I don't think I can anymore. It's supposed to be about the world's most manly men, doing everything the manly way. There's lots of screaming in it, but it's considerably toned down from that. There's supposed to be a lot of violence in it. Not bloody gory violence, but funny violence. Slapstick violence and all-out fist fights too. Like superheroes do in comic books but never on TV because for some reason TV won't let you do the same things that were successful for this character in another medium. If you read the Spiderman comics and you watch the Spiderman TV show, these are two completely different entities. In the comics, he beats the shit out of people all the time, he wins by his fists. He takes the law into his own hands, that's the point of superheroes. It's really tough to be allowed to do that on television, they have different rules. So we're always having trouble showing the Friends fighting anybody. There's a million rules: you can't punch in the face, you can't punch in the stomach, you can't hurt in the vitals. I once wrote a script where there's a punch in the kidneys and I got a note back with a scientific diagram of how dangerous it is to punch someone in the kidneys and...eeeurgh! (makes a sickly, frustrated sound): This is a cartoon! No-one's really getting punched!!!

BI: Do they come in at the start with a large volume of rules or do they wait until you've done stuff?

JK: No, it's after you've done the stuff, but it does make you wonder why they buy a series in the first place. "It's about vigilantes, beating everybody up". And then they say you can't beat anybody up. We got a little bit into it.

BI: Do you think it'll get a second series, or do you think it's being watered down by nay-sayers?

JK: It's being watered down by the television system, that's what they're used to. They're not used to doing something that isn't already on television. For years, superheroes have been wimpy, so the instinct is to try and make our cartoons wimpy.

BI: In Japan they have something called OVA, which is Original Video Animation, which is animation directly for the video market. Would you consider doing something like that?

JK: I'd love to do that, but again every industry has its own set of rules and they never vary from the damn rules. In the States, the whole Direct To Video theory is that you can't sell anything original. Nobody will buy anything original, but they'll buy Christmas Specials, they'll buy knock-off's of Disney movies. Like every time a Disney movie comes out there's about five different bootleg companies who'll come out with their version of Beauty And The Beats or their version of Aladdin, or Little Mermaid. They're all public domain stories, so everyone comes out and they all try to fool the parents into buying these things, thinking they're buying Disney movies for their kids. You can buy three versions of Beauty And The Beast. There's also a million Peter Cottontails, and there's fairy tales and there's millions of Christmas specials.

BI: If you were to make a Christmas Special what kind of one would you make? I remember as a kid seeing Christmas Specials and seeing the same thing over and over again.

JK: And it's the kind of stuff that nobody would want to watch I'd rather watch Bugs Bunny at Christmas than a Christmas Carol.



BI: But if you were asked to do a Christmas story, which one would you do?
JK: Well I already did one in Ren and Stimpy. 'Stimpy's First Fart' was a Christmas Story, and I've been pitching one for years called 'The God-damn Christmas', starring George Liquor, and I got one that I'd like to do about George Liquor's nephews called 'Slap And Ernie Bugger Up Christmas'. If you're going to a Christmas special, fine, but make it funny and amusing. Make it entertaining. Just because it's Christmas doesn't mean it doesn't have to be entertaining, and generally they're the least entertaining of cartoons.
BI: You had mentioned the gay love interest in Ren And Stimpy. Is that other people placing their points of view on it, or even someone from the company?
JK: I used to get letters from gay couples telling me how much they identified with Ren And Stimpy: 'Bruce and I will get into the most horrible spats. We'll yell at each other and break dishes, and then, you know, after its over, we just hug and it's right back into the sack again, just like Ren And Stimpy. 'I'd always read one of those over the intercom when I got one of those letters so that the whole studio could enjoy it. But at the same time we'd get letters from priests telling us how wonderful they thought the programme

"I used to get letters from gay couples telling me how much they identified with Ren And Stimpy"

was and the only problem was that it was on during church so they would set their VCR and sometimes they would goof up and they'd miss the episodes so could we put it on at a different time slot. Everybody read into it whatever their own situation was, which I thought was kind of cool.
BI: Has the Pope seen it?
JK: He's in it. Maybe you should send him a copy. Maybe you could interview him. He was just in Ren and Stimpy, but they made us change his name. The first time we aired that cartoon, it said "Starring the voice of Frank Zap as The Pope", and then after we left they went back and re-did it so they read "Starring the voice of Frank Zap as The Funny Little Man With The Pointy Hat". I couldn't figure that out, it was obviously The Pope.
BI: With Ripping Friends being so manly would they be seen as gay?
JK: How does being manly have anything to do with being gay? They're quite the opposite, I should think. You should watch the Jean Pool episode and decide of they're gay or not.
BI: Do you know anyone who looks like Jean Pool. Is it a memory of a childhood sweetheart in years gone by?
JK: No I just kind of made her up. I think it's my drawing style, she looks like Bjork but that's also the way I draw girls.
BI: Atomic Pig, George Liquor's Comedy Hour and Bert Blast-Off In The Outback are all mentioned in periodically. Are these forthcoming projects?
JK: They're all things I'm going to pitch in Toronto to a couple of the networks next week. The George Liquor show I've been dying to do for years. To tell you the truth I'm not sure why they haven't bought it, but all they want to do in prime-time is prime-time animated sit-coms. When they buy animation, it's The Simpsons and King Of The Hill and Family Guy and there's a million of those type of shows. Then I bring mine in and the first thing they tell me is "This is too well drawn, we can't put this on. Adults don't like well-drawn cartoon. They want them to be wiggly, they want them to look like kids' drawings." I could never work out that theory. They're always looking for formulas, they're always trying to look for why did the Simpsons make it. If we buy anything else for adults, it'd better damn well be like The Simpsons.. That's how they think. They try to analyse what makes the Simpsons; So we've got primitive drawings, it's pretty earthbound, there's no slapstick in it, no cartoon-type jokes. Whereas I bring in mine: it's well-drawn, it does have sit-com aspects to it, like All In The Family in one sense, but on the other hand it does things that a only cartoons can do, and that confuses executives in one sense, because they say "If you're doing things only cartoons can do, that's for kids right?" I say, well, adults like Bugs Bunny and they like The Three Stooges and they watch Ren And Stimpy and they like slapstick and cartoon stuff and impossible stuff and we're just combining it with sit-com elements to make a new type of prime time cartoon. I will not make an imitation of The Simpsons. All the other cartoons are pretty much imitations of The Simpsons, and that's why it's still number one. But I want to do my own thing. Adults don't just like one type of thing. It's like eating the same food over and over again. People like variety, but you can't convince an executive of that. They're just bound by their ways.
BI: Is that because they need to quantify and box things up?
JK: No, I think it's because they can't do it themselves.

END

Ebay: Search All Categories for Ren and Stimpy - 263 Items Found Current prices on all auctions


Original Animation Cell
$129.00


Cigarette Case
$9.99

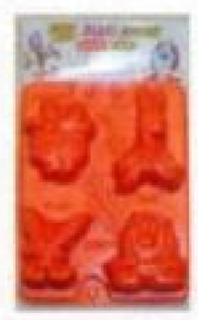

Ren And Stimpy Display
$26.99


Farting Ren - NIB
$25.00


Painting By Bill Wray
$83.00


Farting Stimpy - NIB
$25.00


Plush Toys (Pair)
$12.50


Promo Jell-O Molds
$5.99


Giant Stimpy Head Shaped Pillow $9.99


Rare Muddy Mudskipper Plush
$12.99


Giant Ren Head Shaped Pillow $9.99


4 Factory Sealed Videos Vhs
$50.00

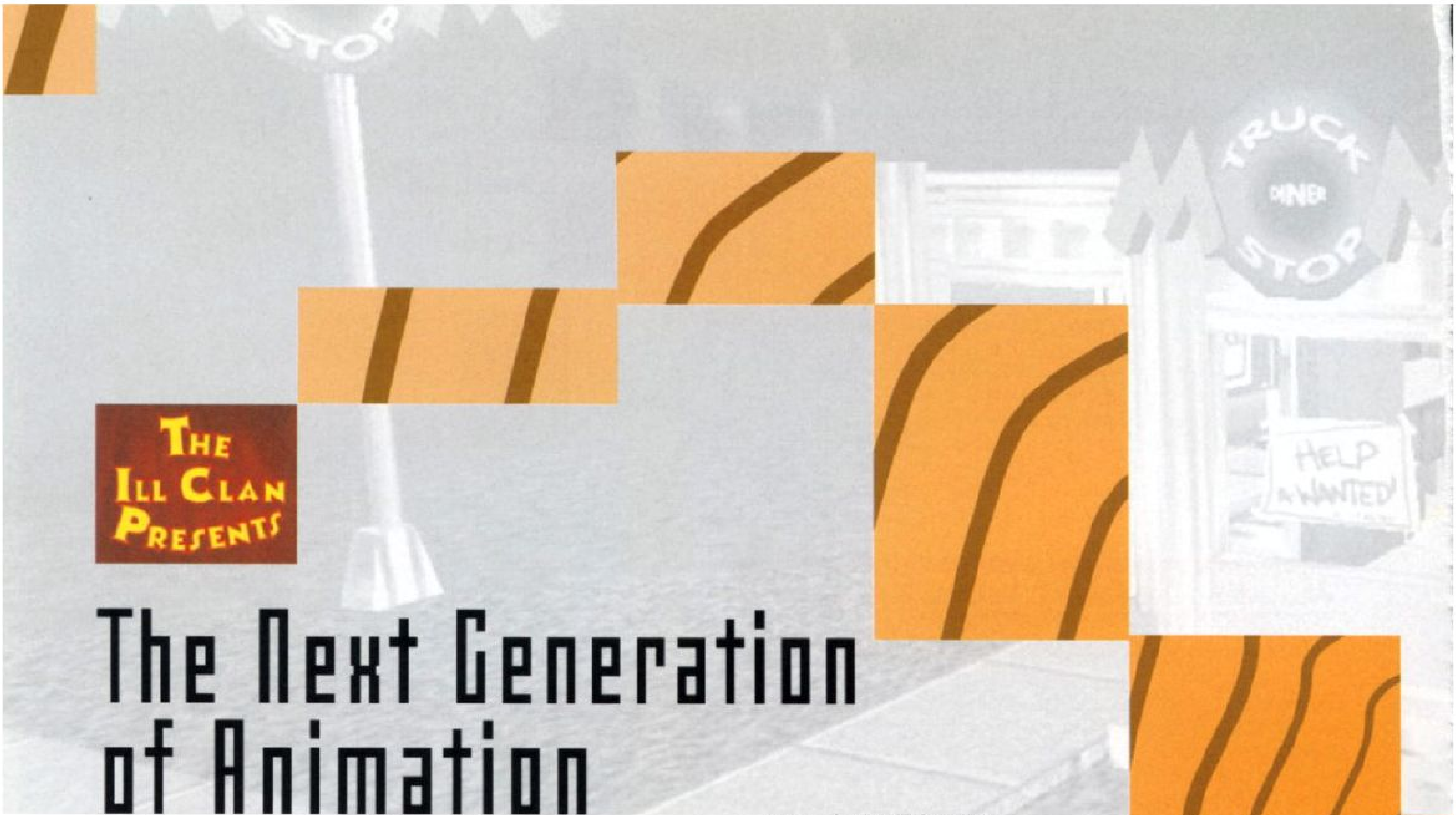

Squirters, Near Mint!
$12.50


Powdered Toast Man PVC Figure
$12.50


Large Plush Stimpy Doll
$4.75


Viewmaster Set 3 Reels $7.99


ShavenYak For Sega Gamegear $3.00



The ILL Clan Presents

The Next Generation of Animation

Writer: Louise Wainwright

THE LOCALE

The Cedar Tavern, on University Place, is a venerable institution, a two-story lodge in the heart of New York City's Union Square / NYU district. Surrounded by thrift shops, hotels and movie theatres, it's the perfect place to head after taking in a flick at the United Artists on Broadway. Plots are deconstructed as easily as the cold beer goes down on a hot day. The haze of cigarette smoke creates a specific hospitable atmosphere.

Which made it the perfect place to meet the eclectic group of guys known as the ILL Clan. Although five of the six of the Clan live in NYC, they have no fixed office address, and the Cedar functions as their headquarters when group meetings are called. The idea of a formal office location is anathema to the organic ethos of the group. And perhaps more to the point, the Cedar Tavern is honest. Want to hear the latest drum 'n bass or experience the future of dating via real-time feeds on video monitors? Then don't come to the Cedar. Want a cold beer while listening to Van Halen? Then the Cedar is it.

THE PLAYAS

It is this lack of pretension that also informs the ILL Clan both as individuals and as a collective. To a one, the ILL Clan members are down-home sorts, guys who spend their time swing dancing, gaming and working their day jobs, guys who gather semi-regularly for creative bull sessions.

It seems that in any group that meets even semi-regularly, roles are assigned or are assumed naturally usingsubtle skill and diplomacy. The ILL Clan is no different. There is no charter, no one takes notes or provides refreshments. And yet, there is an unofficial spokesman, a founding member of the Clan named Paul Marino. Paul is no more or less articulate than his cohorts, and is one of the more soft-spoken, yet he has assumed this role with ease and passion. Perhaps it has to do with this background in TV, which has included a stint as an Emmy Award judge, and as an Emmy Award winner himself. It must be his familiarity with the mechanics and pitfalls of the PR machine that have allowed Paul to wear the mantle of Front Man.

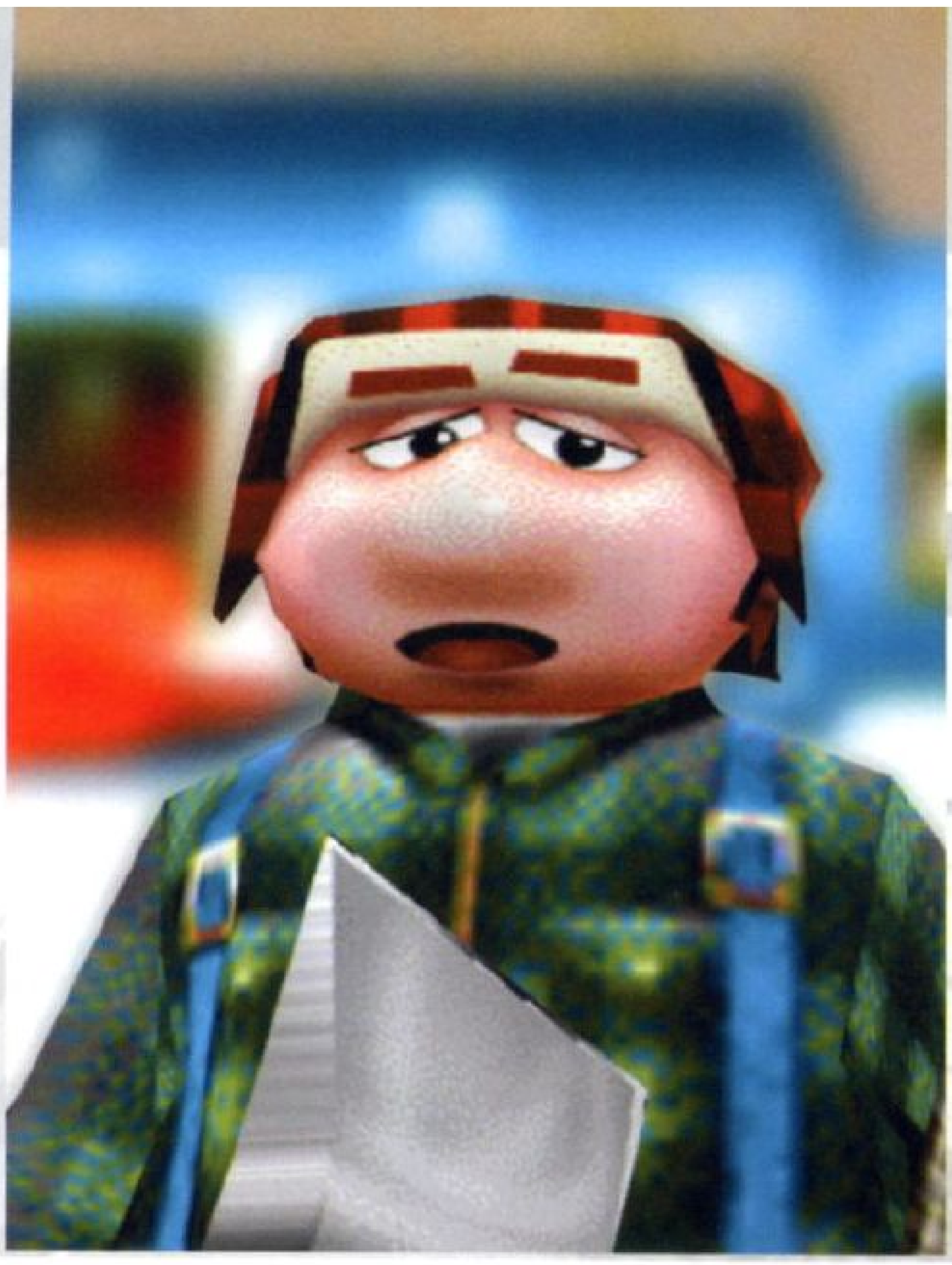
Manu Smith brings a quieter sort of authority to the mix, which is ironic considering that his genius is in sound design and engineering. His heart may be in the ILL Clan but his soul belongs to swing dancing. As an instructor and competitive dancer, Manu knows more than most that smooth and flawless syncopation of movement to sound is fundamental to keeping a viewer engaged, and his particular skills inform every piece coming out of the Clan.

There is even a former US Navy guy in the mix. Although he wasn't as forthcoming about his days as a squid as he was about his 11 years as a key and dolly grip, Frank Dellario nevertheless has the bearing of a military man. The discipline too, if his ability to juggle his swing dancing (another dancer!), writing and multimedia lifestyles with equal flare is any indication.

Is any club complete without a black sheep? In this case, the ILL Clan sports a technical black sheep, as in, the guy has a degree in English Literature, wears a great coat and smokes like a chimney. The token smoker, Paul Jannicola introduced instead the "improv factor" into the ILL Clan. The art of improv, thinking fast, riffing real-time against the absurdities of the human condition is arguably as fundamental to the success and continual growth of the ILL Clan as are their gaming chops. Larry Lumberjack and Chef Carl are as much creations of the improv aesthetic as they are pixels and bits.

This improv thread also runs through John Clavis, the last remaining New York City dwelling member of the Clan. John has been performing improvisational skits and comedy for over 10 years. His natural confidence allows him to step in as the Clan's "satirical guru" as needed, lending humor and substance to the absurdist storylines. The author and publisher of two books, John's skills and abilities as a writer and storyteller help provide the beginning, middle and end to the films of the ILL Clan.

The final member of the Clan is actually in Florida, the only one to have split town following the devastation of September 11. Matt Diminiatti is a School of Visual Arts graduate, classically trained in film and animation. His schooling and current duties as cartoonist and flash animator lend the films coming out the ILL Clan a formality that they might otherwise lack.



THE PRODUCT

The ILL Clan is at the vanguard of a filmic movement known as machinima. Machinima films are created using primarily the Quake gaming engine, although there are some Clans out there that adapt other immersive games such as Half Life and UnReal. However, Quake was and continues to be the engine of choice. With its release in 1996, Quake became the consummate immersive gaming environment, allowing its players to assume the 1st person, or camera, POV as they navigated throughout the complex 3D environments. As is typical in the gaming community, some players were not content to simply involve themselves in the prepackaged and predetermined experienced. They hunted for easter eggs, the hidden opportunities to play the game on a level accessible only to those who found the eggs, and subsequently advanced even beyond that. Because of its open source code, Quake implicitly encouraged the desire and abilities of certain gamers to create customized and enhanced experiences. This parallel activity initially resulted simply in Clan-specific skins, allowing one group of players to distinguish themselves from another group superficially. Soon the Clans graduated to creating demos of their modifications, and posted them for others to access. In the tradition of open-source, these tweaks allow for Clans to share and modify their enhancements across the web. These demos extended the life of the game, and were for fun, not profit. (Tweaking copyrighted properties is strictly taboo.) Clans competed with each other not only in tournaments that proved gaming prowess, but also in the creation of demos that simply wowed the others. It was from this demo process that the idea of actually creating Quake-based films was manifested. Realistic environments, engaging characters, compelling story lines, specific solutions, open source code a talented crew can take these ingredients, mix them to varying degrees, and create a film from scratch.

When in film mode, the ILL Clan operates much like a traditional movie set, with a script, motivations for characters, the standard lighting and blocking concerns. But true to the improv nature of its founders, ILL Clan productions have a fluidity and momentum to them that are more suggestive of a miniDV live action short than a rigid gaming construct. The machinima movement has momentum, and its half-life as the online equivalent of a gang tag on a highway overpass is coming to an end. There will be a savvy musician, or producer, or rep out there who sees machinima for what it is: a singular manifestation of identity and creativity that is wholly unique.



THE END

THE AIR LOOM



Hi-Tech mind controls

James Tilly Matthews

Patient Zero

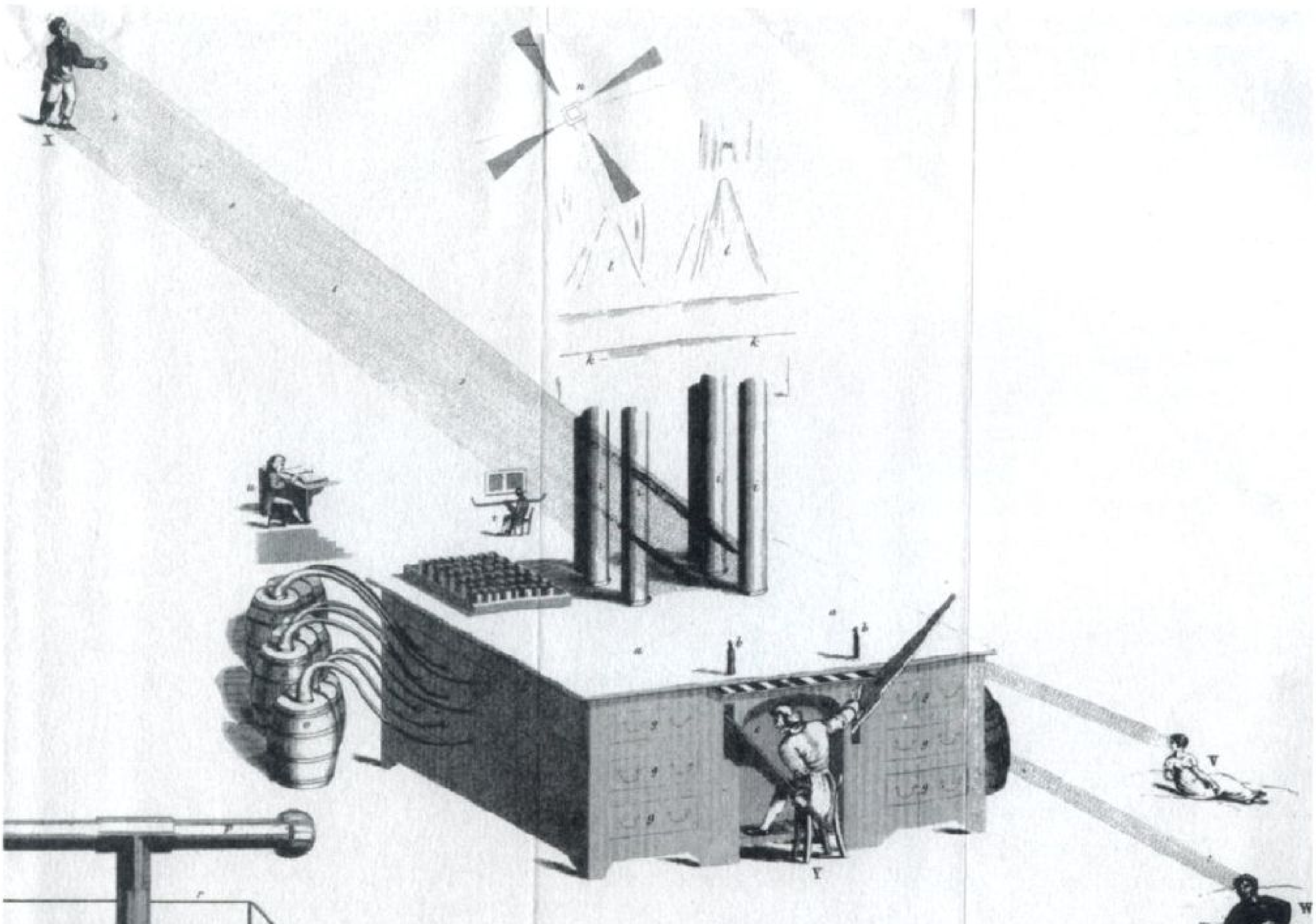
There were two compelling reasons why, in 1810, the Bedlam mad-doctor John Haslam wrote the longest psychiatric report on a delusional patient which had ever been compiled up to that time. One was professional: the patients delusions were the most complex and intricately detailed that anyone had ever come across, even including immaculate technical drawings of imaginary machinery. The other was personal: he was determined to prove to the world that the patient was indeed mad, and thus that he himself was a competent and rational doctor.

Writer: Mike Jay

His patients name was James Tilly Matthews, and he had quite a story. Originally from Wales, he had strong Republican sympathies and, after the French Revolution, began travelling between London and Paris as a self-appointed peacemaker, trying to head off a possible war between France and England. In Paris he also encountered the mysterious new science of mesmerism, which would play a crucial role in his later ideas, or delusions.

But the moderate Girondin leaders who Matthews was negotiating with lost power to the fanatical Jacobins, and Matthews was seized on suspicion of being an English double agent. He was imprisoned and probably tortured for three years while all around him were losing their heads. In 1796 he was released and returned to England - and it's at this point that his story begins to diverge spectacularly from consensus reality.

The first evidence we have of this is two letters written to the Home Secretary, Lord Liverpool, in late 1796. The first is a barely punctuated five-page rant about his spy adventures, plots and counter-plots, conspiracies and treasons, culminating in the claim that Matthews is being framed for a (non-existent) fraud on the Bank of England. The second sees Lord Liverpool transformed from potential saviour to mortal enemy it opens pronounce your Lordship to be a most diabolical Traitor and ends several pages later, with an intimation of the direction in which we're heading: You may succeed in imposing on the World that I am insane, but I will persevere until I convince you and the world that I am perfectly otherwise. No replies to these green-ink ramblings survive, and a few weeks later Matthews was arrested in the House of Commons Gallery for shouting further bizarre accusations at Lord



Liverpool in person. At this point he was hauled off to the Bethlem Hospital Bedlam and restrained as a dangerous lunatic.

Matthews family protested his incarceration in terms which would be echoed over the years not only by his friends but by other doctors: that he was a good-natured man, a peacemaker, who had become eccentric as a result of his misfortunes and had developed cranky views on politics. But John Haslam, Bedlam's resident apothecary, had strong opinions about the nature of insanity. As he put it in his report on Matthews, Illustrations of Madness, Madness being the opposite to reason and good sense, as light is to darkness, straight is to crooked & c., it appears wonderful that two opposite opinions could be entertained on the subject. Matthews was mad, and anyone who argued otherwise was a danger to the medical profession.

Some of Haslam's defensiveness can perhaps be put down to the fact that Bedlam itself was, at the time, a fairly eccentric institution. Apart from Haslam, there was a resident physician, Dr.Thomas Monro, who showed up about once a month, and a surgeon, Bryan Crowther, whose passion was dissecting the brains of lunatics and who himself lapsed terminally into alcoholism and lunacy to the point where he

The Acceptable Face of Mind Control

Mark Pilkington

200 years on, the effects attributed to Matthews' Airloom seem altogether less preposterous. Bill the King is alive and well and living in Canada.

In 1964, Dr Jose Delgado of Yale University famously demonstrated the power of his Stimoceiver brain implant by halting a charging bull with the press of a button. He dreamed of a "pychocivilised society" but his technology, which required invasive surgery, seems grotesque and primitive compared to what is possible today.

"Within the last two decades a potential has emerged which was improbable but which is now marginally feasible. This potential is the technical capability to influence directly the major portion of the approximately six billion brains of the human species...by generating neural information within a physical medium within which all members of the species are immersed."

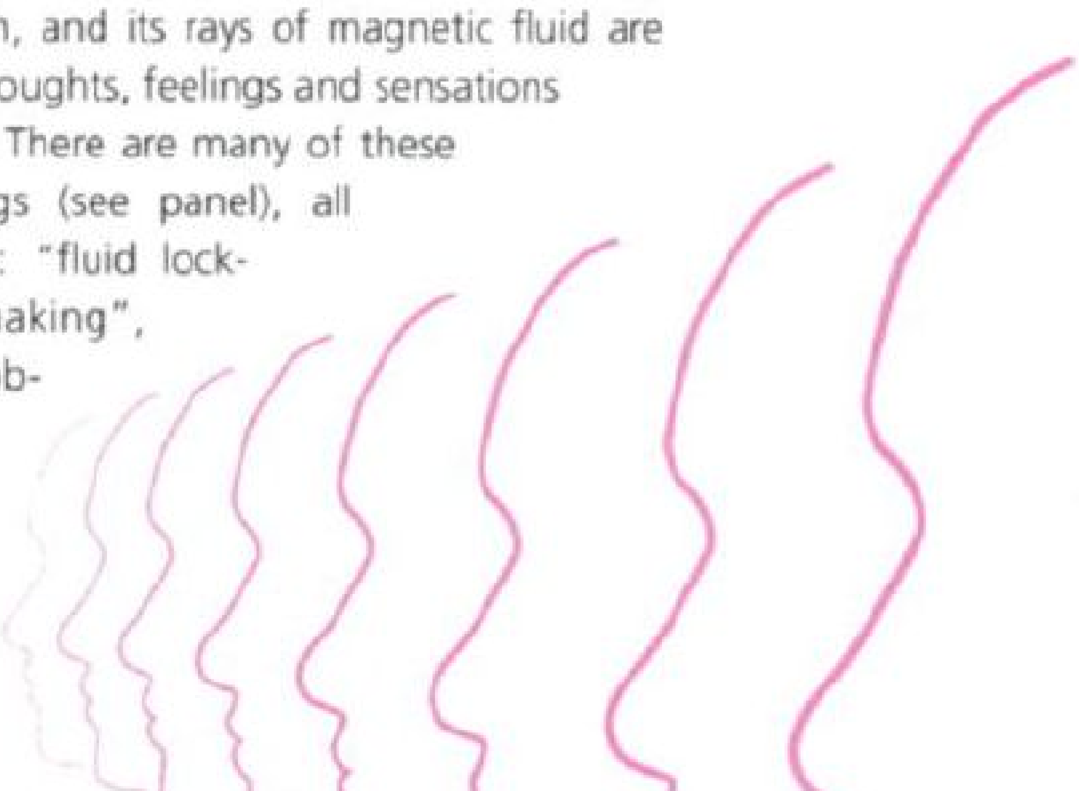
So wrote Dr Michael Persinger in the June 1995 issue of the journal Perceptual and Motor Skills. Using a motorcycle helmet fitted with solenoids, Persinger and his team on the Behavioural Neuroscience Programme at Canada's Laurentian University are quietly mapping out the electrical landscape of the brain. By applying carefully controlled electromagnetic fields to specific regions of the brain, Persinger has produced some startling effects, including full blown religious and out of body experiences.

He has found, for example, that interfering with hippocampal activity (the hippocampi are buried deep in the temporal lobes, about parallel to the ears on either side of the head) can induce amnesia and time distortions.

was so insane as to have a strait-waistcoat. This left Haslam as the sole bulwark of sanity, dealing with Matthews on a daily basis.

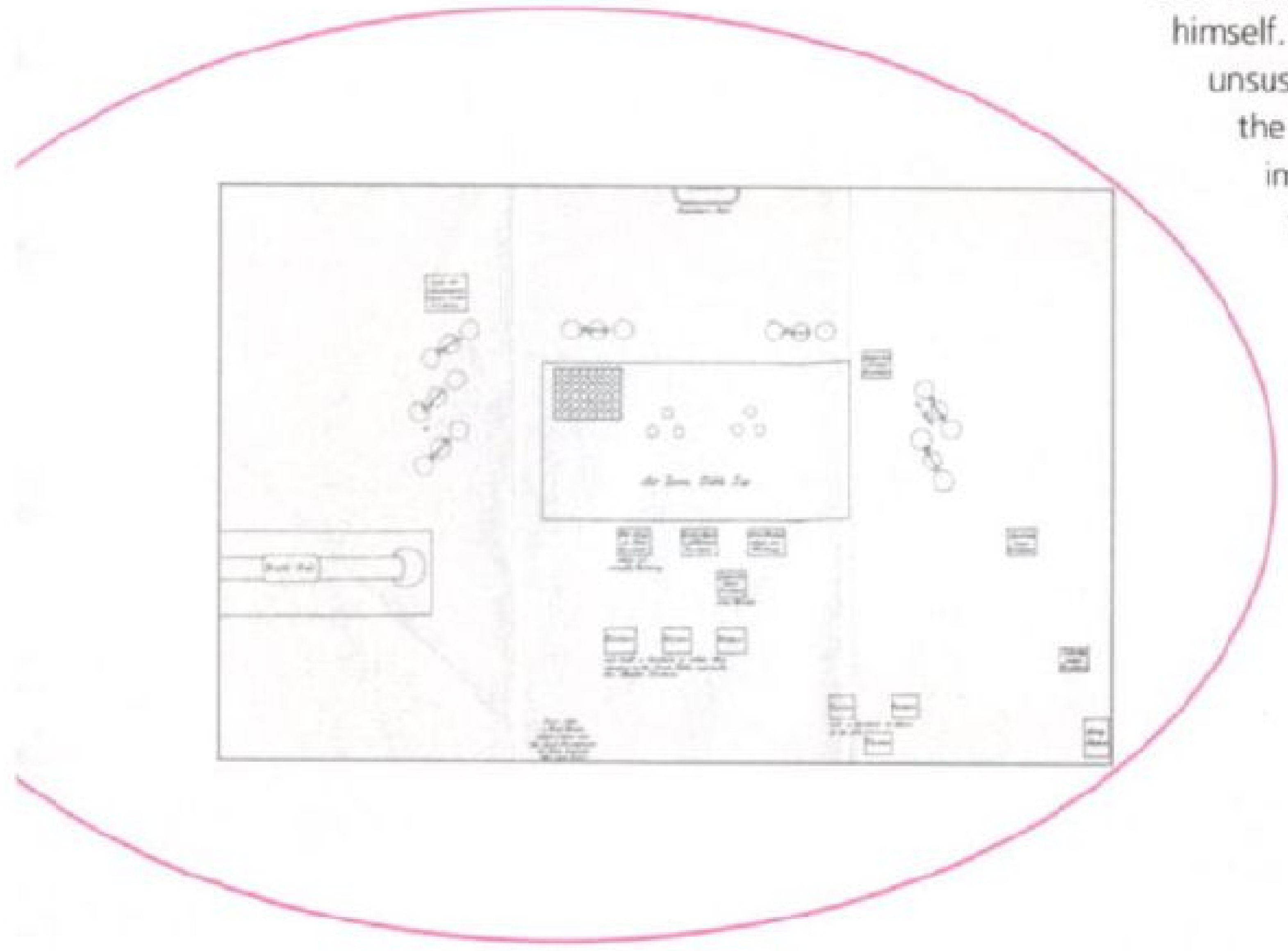
Matthews view of the world had by this point become one of the most florid and baroque delusional systems ever recorded before or since. His interpretation of his political adventures and current incarceration was now along the following lines:

Outside the Bedlam compound, by London Wall, a gang of villains are controlling and tormenting his mind with diabolical rays. They are using a machine called an 'Air Loom', of which he can draw exact diagrams, and which combines modern pneumatic chemistry with mesmerism and the cutting-edge industrial technology of the textile loom. It incorporates keys, levers, barrels, batteries, sails, brass retorts and magnetic fluid, and works by directing and modulating magnetically charged air currents. It runs on a mixture of foul substances, including spermatic-animal-seminal rays, effluvia of dogs and putrid human breath, and its rays of magnetic fluid are focused to deliver thoughts, feelings and sensations to Matthews' brain. There are many of these mind-control settings (see panel), all with precise names: "fluid locking", "stone making", "thigh talking", "lobster-cracking", "bomb-bursting", "lengthening the brain" and the dreaded "brain-saying", whereby thoughts are forced into his head against his will. As a result of the Air Loom, Matthews is tormented constantly by delusions, physical agonies, fits of laughter and parroting whatever nonsense they feed into his head. No wonder everyone thinks he's mad.



The Air Loom is run by a gang of seven, lead by "Bill the King". All details are recorded by "Jack the Schoolmaster"; the French liaison is accomplished by a woman called "Charlotte", who seems to be as much a prisoner as Matthews, and is often chained up near-naked; Sir Archy is a woman who dresses as a man and speaks in obscenities. The machine is operated by the sinister and nameless "Glove Woman" (who wears gloves all the time because she has the itch). If Matthews sees any of these characters in the street, they grasp batons of magnetic metal which cause them to disappear. At night, they lie together in promiscuous intercourse and perform puppet-shows which become Matthews dreams.

But this activity isn't directed solely at Matthews. There are Air Loom gangs all over London, influencing the minds of public figures, including William Pitt himself. They lurk in streets, theatres and coffee-houses, where they trick the unsuspecting into inhaling the magnetic fluid which will place them under the control of the Air Loom. By poisoning the minds of diplomats and implanting malice and suspicion, they threaten national and international catastrophe.



It's not surprising that Haslam was robust in his view that Matthews was barking mad. But psychiatrys recently-granted powers to restrain and imprison the mad came at a price: they needed to demonstrate that their patients would be a danger to the public if freed. Haslam was in no doubt that Matthews was dangerous: he had harassed Lord Liverpool and, in any case, there are already too many maniacs allowed to enjoy a dangerous liberty. But Matthews family persisted with the case that he was merely a mistreated gentle soul, and moreover that he had learnt to control his outbursts in public. In 1809 they engaged two London doctors, Henry Clutterbuck and George Birkbeck, to examine him independently. They both found that he suffered from delusions on certain subjects but was otherwise sane and no risk to the public.

It was at this point that Haslams demonstration of Matthews madness became a personal vendetta. Haslam launched a broadside against Clutterbuck and Birkbeck: they weren't psychiatrists, they'd only examined Matthews briefly rather than living with him for years, and how they failed to detect his insanity is inexplicable. At stake in this was not only Haslams personal reputation but that of Bedlam, psychiatry in general, even the medical profession itself. He decided that the best approach would be not to judge Matthews directly, but simply to detail his madness and allow it to speak for itself. Hence Illustrations of Madness, an unprecedentedly lengthy exposition of the Air Loom and Matthews associated conspiracies, to which he added a manuscript which Matthews himself had written in 1804 calling himself James, Absolute Sole and Sacred Omni Imperious Arch Grand Arch Sovereign Omni Imperious Arch Grand Arch Proprietor Omni Imperious Arch-Grand-Arch-Emperor Supreme, and offering millions of pounds in rewards to every nation on earth for the capture of the Air Loom Gang. On this, Haslam must have felt, he could rest his case.

Haslam had no interest in the content of Matthews delusions, being of the view that any and all productions of the insane mind were simply gibberish. But his record gives us perhaps the first example of the now-familiar syndrome of mind-control paranoia based around cutting-edge technology. Whereas prior to Matthews such delusions were usually cast in terms of demons and possession, Matthews frame is strikingly oriented towards the modern science of its day: gas chemistry, mesmerism, industrial machinery. His experiences in the post-Revolutionary Terror, which even sober commentators like Edmund Burke agreed was rife with head-spinning conspiracies, add another modern dimension to his madness. For everyone who has since had messages beamed at them through their fillings, or their TV sets, or via high-tech surveillance, MI5, Masonic lodges or UFOs, James Tilly Matthews is Patient Zero.

Electroprodding the amygdala, located just in front of the hippocampus, may produce feelings ranging from sexual ecstasy to existential terror, while random sounds, words or events can become imbued with immense cosmic meaning.

Persinger's seeming ability to reduce the folds and creases of the brain to a series of experiential triggers is as inspiring as it is alarming. The Laurentian team talk about theraputic and medical uses for their discoveries - switching off the pain response shouldn't be too difficult, but more ambitious is the notion of provoking the brain into bringing about physical bodily changes. In some hypnotised subjects even the suggestion of a burn or pinprick can result in corresponding physical manifestations - so could the brain be encouraged to promote healing? The team are considering how they might pre-program electrical currents, creating electrodoses to ease a wide range of ailments. There's even talk of entertainment applications.

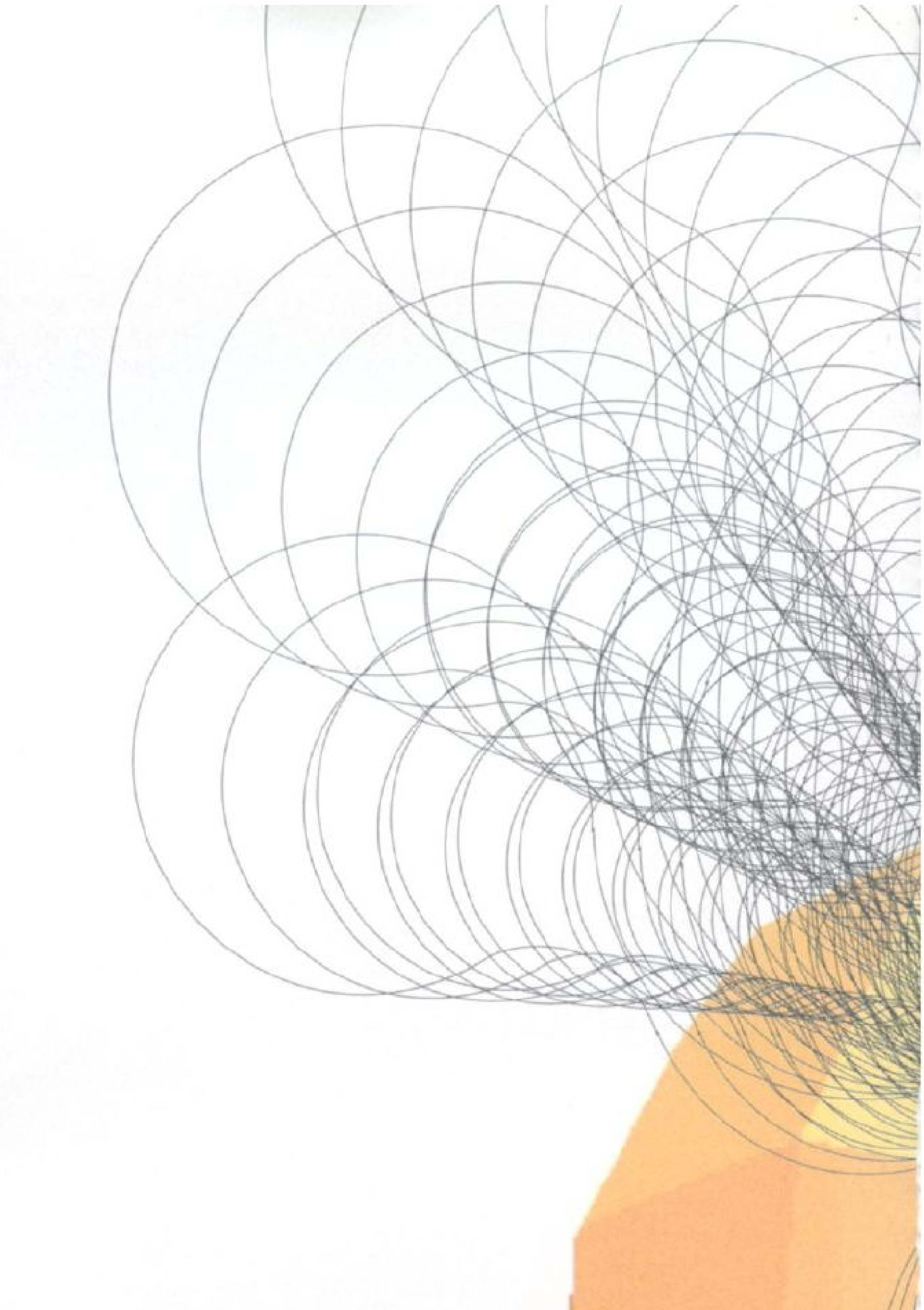
The potential flip side to all this is, of course, deeply unsettling. Persinger's claims to be able to recreate "alien abductions" and other mystical and paranormal experiences have led to much extreme speculation about the Military Industrial Complex / Illuminati / Women's Institute's role in the UFO abduction phenomenon - if Persinger can do it, then so can they. But such phenomena have been with us always, under multiple guises, leading Persinger to theorise about the effects of natural electromagnetic fields on sensitive individuals.

Whispers of Persinger's involvement in more sinister projects haunt the information underground but, as a man who moved to Canada in 1969 to avoid being drafted, it's not difficult to see him as the friendly face of mind control.

Persinger's Home Page
www.laurentian.ca/neurosci/persinger.html

A summary of Persinger's Tectonic Strain Theories
www.laurentian.ca/neurosci/TECTONIC.HTM

The Perceptual and Motor Skills article
www.mindspring.com/~txporter/persemf.htm

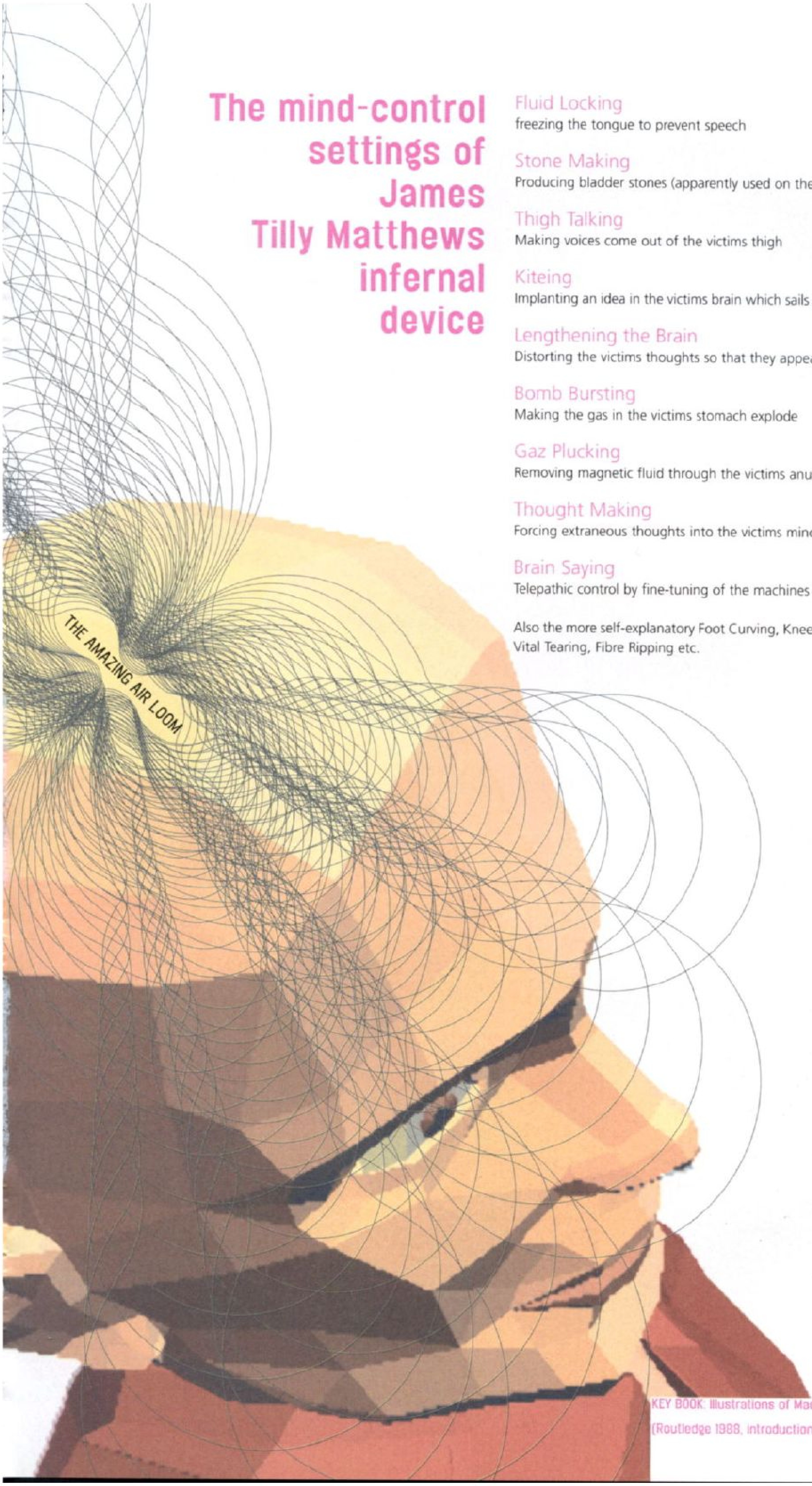


Haslams report kept Matthews in Bedlam but, unfortunately for him, Matthews was continuing to be a model patient. He learnt calligraphy and architectural drawing, and drew up excellent plans for a new Bedlam building which so impressed the governors that they paid him 30 pounds. In 1814 he was moved to the more open asylum of Foxis London House in Hackney, where he became a trusty inmate and assisted the doctors until his death in 1815.

As it turned out, though, Matthews death wasn't the end of Haslams woes but the beginning. A House of Commons Committee, set up in 1815 to investigate complaints by the relatives of Bedlam inmates, brought the Matthews affair back from the grave. Other doctors testified that Haslam had chained Matthews up as punishment and asserted his authority in other brutal ways. Staff and patients queued up to testify that Matthews had been a harmless and talented eccentric. When the Committees report was published in 1816, Haslam was dismissed by the Bedlam governors.

Haslams career was ruined. He sold everything he owned, doggedly retrained as a physician and eventually requalified as an M.D. at the age of sixty. But the Matthews case seems to have destroyed his conviction that the mad could be scientifically distinguished from the sane. In his old age, he appeared as a forensic witness in a court case, and was asked if the defendant was of sound mind. His reply was: "I never saw any human being who was of sound mind...I presume the Deity is of sound mind, and He alone".

The mind-control settings of James Tilly Matthews infernal device



Fluid Locking
freezing the tongue to prevent speech

Stone Making
Producing bladder stones (apparently used on the Duke of Portland)

Thigh Talking
Making voices come out of the victims thigh

Kiteing
Implanting an idea in the victims brain which sails around in his thoughts

Lengthening the Brain
Distorting the victims thoughts so that they appear ridiculous to others

Bomb Bursting
Making the gas in the victims stomach explode

Gaz Plucking
Removing magnetic fluid through the victims anus

Thought Making
Forcing extraneous thoughts into the victims mind

Brain Saying
Telepathic control by fine-tuning of the machines magnetic fluids

Also the more self-explanatory Foot Curving, Knee Nailing, Eye Screwing, Vital Tearing, Fibre Ripping etc.

KEY BOOK: Illustrations of Madness by John Haslam (Routledge 1988, introduction by Roy Porter)


YATES &

ART or FETISH?

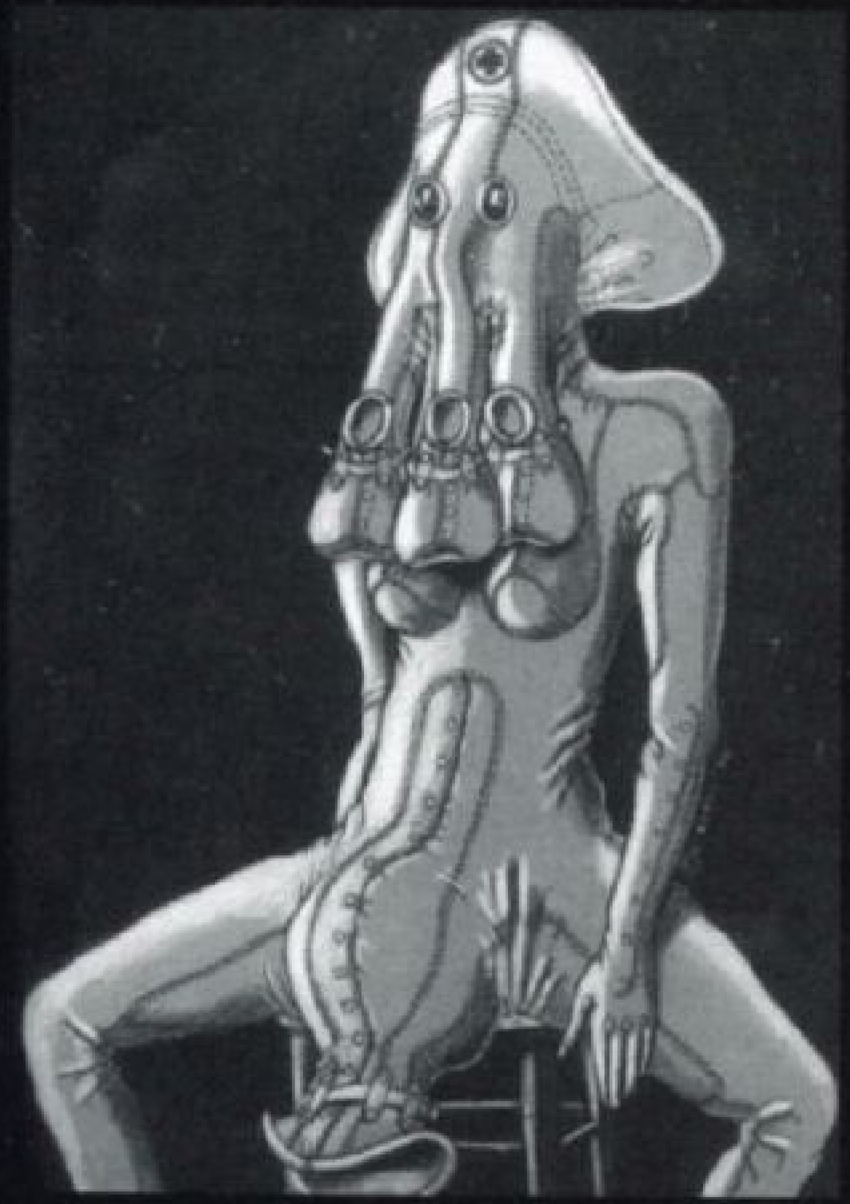
Intro: David Wood

The new millennium symbolises the end of the natural flesh-and-blood body, and the gestation of a new shapeshifting, mutating, hybrid body-form of the future. Such real and potential changes are becoming increasingly reflected in the cultural body of the collective subconscious and our creative dreams, fears and fantasies, and are further accelerated by a range of technologies which augment their possibilities at a exponential rate.

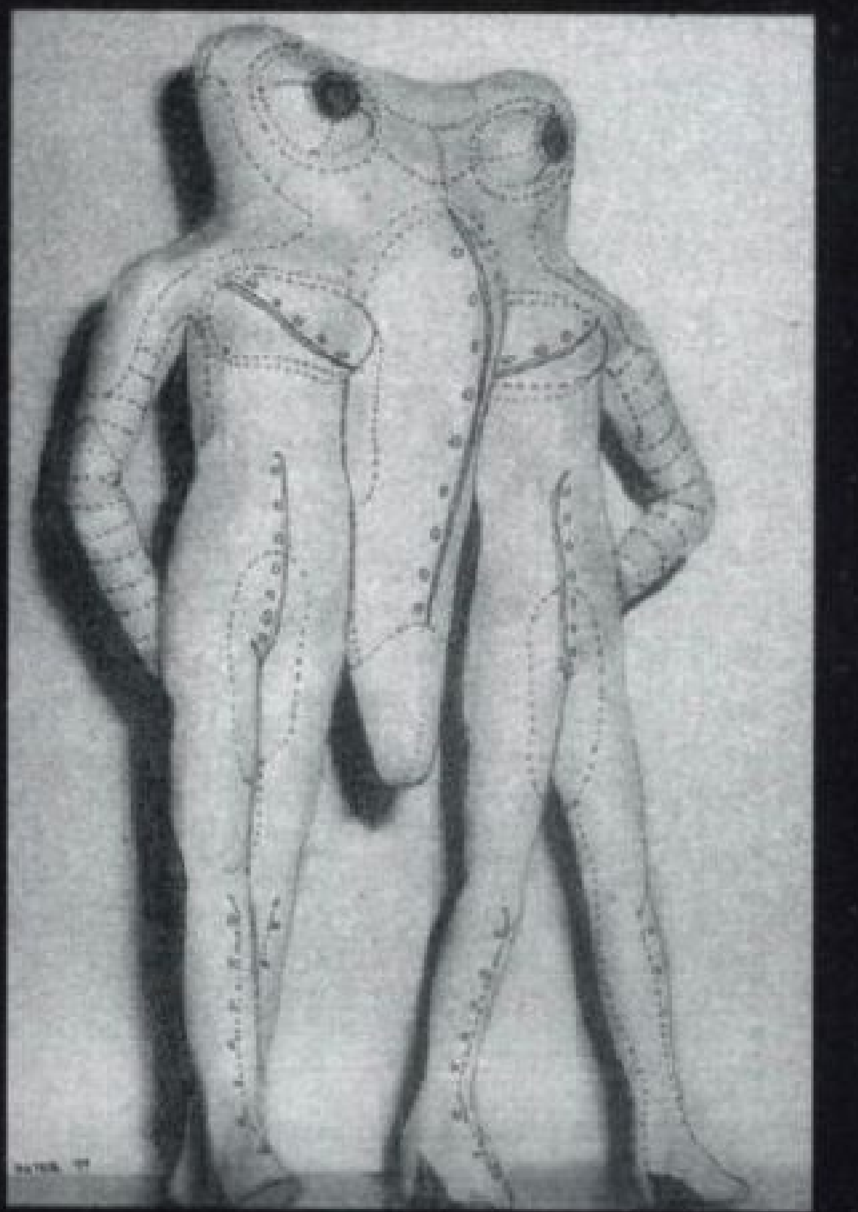
Working specifically with the body, fashion, like body art performance, currently reflects the body's physical and conceptual boundaries more directly than other art forms. In particular, the resulting creative mutations are most visible at the outer extremes of fashion, from the avante-garde of couture, to the cutting edge of the post-fetish scene. Both share the creative freedom to pass beyond the purely practical and give the imagination totally free reign to explore the internal and external; modify and expand the body's boundaries; and expand what it is to be human.

Van Saper, the alias for a New York based architect is one such pioneer exploring the outer edges of the cultural zeitgeist and bringing back visions worked out on paper and then projected into full physical manifestation. With the aid of costumier E-Garbs and, later, latex fashion designer House of Harlot, Van Saper has realised a whole species of possiblities yet to infect the culture at large.

FRANK VAN SAPER
Interview by Mark Bennett







Black Ice: What's the catalyst for making these costumes in the first place?

Van Saper: Well, they grew out of childhood preoccupations. I never saw the things that pre-occupied me as images, not for a long time since the current fascination with fetishism began: ten or twenty years ago, really, in terms of public exposure. It's more of a need to make things that I didn't see anywhere else.

BI: Where were you looking for these things?

VS: Everywhere, including magazines. I was looking for images that matched what I had in mind and I just couldn't find them anywhere. Once I did begin to identify other people doing stuff in the same general line, there was still some distance to go. So I guess I had to make things that I couldn't find. That's the simplest answer.

BI: How do you start with a design? How do you conceive it?

VS: It varies. I think one of the most interesting processes is when I'm walking along the streets, perhaps looking for an image, and I can't find anything, when all of a sudden I cross the street and I look in a store window and think "Oh my God! What is that?". Then I get closer and I'm disappointed because it's just a normal piece of clothing. So what I'm trying to do is recapturing that first confusion of when I first saw the image and didn't know what it was. And that's the richest sensation, looking at something and not quite recognising it, and yet knowing it means something. Sometimes these things are subliminal. But that's one method: there are others of course.

BI: Would you be trying to interpret stuff lodged in your subconscious that's being triggered by elements around you?

VS: Yes, if you sit there at a table and force yourself, that sometimes works. But it's not as fresh. Another way that is very effective is to be very functional, because if you're trying to work out functional details you get outside your own head and try to make things work. And I think that's why the whole point of working with E-Garbs - aside from his creative input - is that he always pulls one back and says I don't think we can do that.

E-Garbs: I think the functional element is very important as well - I think we both agree.

VS: You can make a computer graphic design that won't translate into leather.

BI: So you're still sticking with people with two arms, two legs and one head, then.

EG: I think we may end up with more than that, but there is a real person in there somewhere. Our work has to relate to that.

BI: Would you consider your creations art, sculpture, clothing or a mixture of all the above?

VS: I would say mainly clothing. But I also think there is a bit of all of that.

EG: Describing it as clothing and functional clothing is a better definition of what it is. A lot of it is sculpture when I am working on it. I feel like I'm sculpting, I'm making it in three dimensions.

VS: Yes, especially that last suit you were working on - I was surprised when you actually became a sculptor for about a week.

EG: Yeah, I had to sculpt the entire suit out of polystyrene and be able to cut a pattern from it, which ended up being the best method.

BI: Which one was this?

EG: The Betty Suit, the Betty suit is on all fours, joined somewhere between the front of the thigh and the back of the upper arm.

BI: Is there a kind of an illusionary source for the creations that comes from one group of particular animals or creatures or fauna?

VS: I don't think so, if there is an origin to it, it's really the homunculus, the single object of a distorted human appearing in psychology books. I think that's one of the common features that these works have.

EG: The animal is very much the human. I see a human when I see Van Saper's designs: it's not animalism at all. It's deconstructed and reconstructed human form.

BI: Is there a preference for working in leather and for the colour schemes that you have used to date?

EG: Leather is a wonderful medium for what you can do with it. You can get really thick leather that you can sculpt with and make different forms, but there's also really lightweight leather. It's incredibly easy to work with as there is no weft and wane, and it's not knitted so it's not going to fall apart when you cut. It's just excellent for its practical and creative properties. I've been working with leather for thirteen years, for me its smell and the whole feel of it has far more impact than rubber or any other material.

VS: What I was going to mention a moment ago was about the seams and this sculptural quality that allows leather to be joined along curves in a way in order to work out the pattern. Take the "Betty" suit: even when it's not worn, even when it's lying flat and all crumpled up it still has a structure to it.

EG: That's down to the leather a lot. I have used fairly heavy leather, 1.1 to 1.5mm thickness, which holds it together and gives it body even when it's not worn. It can have a spooky deflated look about it, which I think is quite satisfying.

BI: Are your own creations erotic in any way?

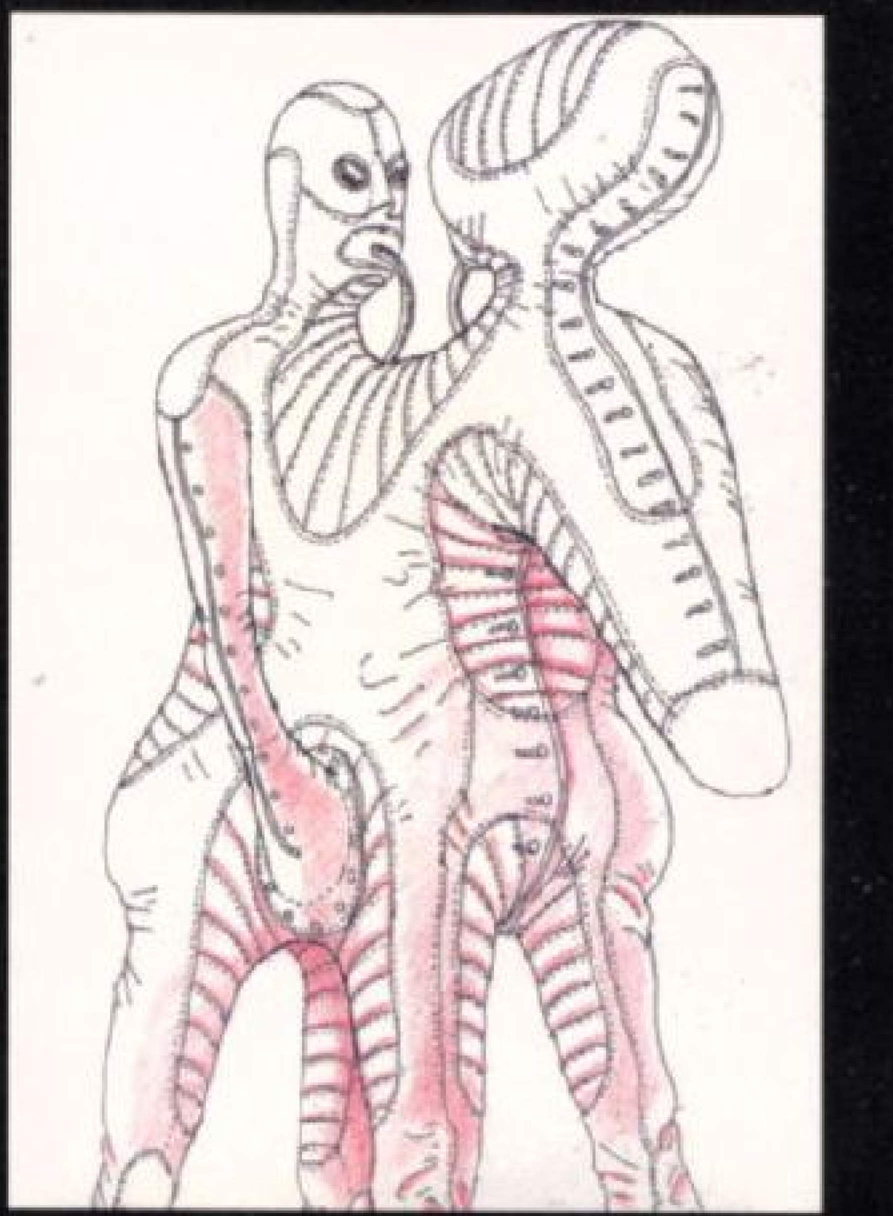
VS: Yeah, they're primarily that. They're more than that too, but the erotic element has to be there. The basic reason for its existence is to fulfill some aspect of an erotic fantasy, so that's an underlying motivation.

EG: Erotic? Yes they are but it often depends on what mood I am in. The fact they are made from leather I find erotic: when you're inside them you're fully covered all the way through to gloves and hopefully in the future we'll make some kind of footwear as well. I find being head-to-toe in leather an exciting vision.

BI: E-Garbs, what about the masks you have recently made for some of your other clients: their purpose was sometimes for theatre and performance but would you say they were generally erotic in motivation?

EG: No, not so much. They're possibly shamanistic, possibly more confrontational, attention-seeking masks and that's more getting into the






realms of art I think: they have a concept, an idea, and I am purely concerned with aesthetics on them. Unless it's a commission, in which case it has to have a function according to what the client wants. Three of the nine masks I made recently were commissioned and I had briefs on what to do for them. In fact those three have turned out as three of the best of them. I work best when there is interaction.

BI: And were those specifically for a particular function?

EG: Well yes, there was one for a computer ad, for example. My brief was "make it Egyptian". Another was for the dance performer Laurie Booth who'd use it for a kind of Shamanistic dance called Night Walk, about walking long distances at night. I made him a hybrid head with antlers on its front and a kind of leather spiders web going over the head with straps at the back. It had a yak's hair ponytail and detachable tusks coming out of the cheeks, which he would remove at different stages of the dance. The third one was for the London group Temple T. They wanted a Baphomet mask, a large moulded leather goat's head that fits completely around the head.

BI: OK switching back to Van Saper briefly - How has being an architect affected these creations?

VS: Being an architect helps in that. I think three-dimensionally and have ways of representing things in drawings even if I'm not actually making them.

EG: Van Saper's are some of the best drawings anyone has ever given me as a guide to work from, and I think that relates to the fact he's an architect. For me making them in 3D helps a lot, they're extremely well drawn. I can get a lot closer to what Van Saper wants. Often with fashion sketches the designers do the proportions of the body way out: the heads are tiny, the legs are really long, they're just scribbles. Those kinds of drawings are really impossible to work from because they leave a lot to the imagination for the pattern cutter or maker. But Van Saper's drawings are spot on because of his architectural background.

BI: So, going from his drawings to the creation: is it a difficult step or is it mainly the direction they would be going in? Is there a lot of sorting out, back and forth?

EG: We do a fair bit of sorting out, discussing options on design. It's usually to do with where the lines are going to go for the pattern cutting.

BI: What are the reactions of the people who have worn these suits? Have people wanted to wear these suits or was it a case of bribing models to get them into them.

EG: Some of the suits for the show at the Torture Garden club in December 96 were quite cruel actually, because I didn't cut proper ventilation shafts in the mouth areas and I ended up having to make some minor adjustments because a few models found they could not breathe. Obviously the reaction to wearing a suit is a certain amount of fear to start with, but hopefully leading to exhilaration and excitement. Especially if you are exposing parts of your body that you wouldn't normally and you're tied up in that scenario, unable to move your arms or your hands. It can be very exhilarating I think. Total surrender to the suit.

BI: Have these suits only been worn on stage at Torture Garden?

EG: They have been worn mainly for the show. I haven't worn any of them to clubs myself.

VS: Hey, but that would be a very desirable thing to do, E-Garbs!

EG: I'm probably slightly concerned that they might get damaged. I have tried walking around in the Ubangi suits head for a while and it's almost impossible, because you bump into people; then there's the fact that I do actually like to have a drink and a cigarette when I am out! Only some of the masks I have designed recently seem to be more adaptable to social corresponding pleasures at a nightclub, rather than a full-on sensory deprivation suit.

BI: Do people find that they get different personalities emerging when they are wearing the suits where it's so all-encompassing that their identity is surrendered to something that is so alien?

VS: I think it has that effect on me. I can think of one person other than myself who wore one at some length who was a model at a photo session in Canada before I met E-Garbs. They photographed this rather cumbersome red suit on industrial waste ground outside of Toronto at night so this thing was spot-lit and you could see the Toronto skyline in the background. The model wearing it was in and out of it over a period of hours, and apparently they were out of it in the end. Especially at night with all those bright lights, it sort of changed their perception at least for a short while.

BI: When you say changed perceptions, do you mean there's something about looking out of the suits that re-maps ones visual and audio perceptions?

EG: The donning of a suit might help some people contact their gods. A suit with a kitchen sink extruding from the stomach could be considered kitchen sink shamanism. (laughs)

BI: Are there background stories to different suits?

VS: Yeah, I think so. For example the one that we called the Ubangi suit, the one with the extended lip, grew out of a combination of things. Partly African imagery, partly from a sideshow poster I saw in a book about carnivals, which showed a person with obviously exaggerated lips of that type. E-Garbs felt that didn't do very much but the addition of the cone transformed it into a holding tube and it evoked a toiletry feeling about it. So it evolved as this composite story of combining African and plumbing elements and a few other things.

EG: Many of the suits are like that. I can see how they have evolved.

VS: Usually there is a lot of evolution between the beginning and the end. But if you're trying to do real peculiar things, the surprise is really the final outcome.

BI: Would either of you consider donning a suit as a shamanic act, and if so, what would be the purpose of the ritual or process you would be entering?

EG: I feel the suits are based on human forms, unless there's some kind of futuristic shamanism in them which I am not aware of. No, there's not a shamanic act.







VS: One of the most interesting images I've seen in New York, which I saw many years ago in the Museum of Natural History was this pair of mannequins in the African section. A young man and woman are in this initiation ritual and they are both knitted into these garment that consists of one tightly knit piece covering their entire body - there are literally no seams or openings. They had to be cut out of it at the end, and all the genitalia and everything else are also done in this knitted material. Now is that a shamanistic thing? In a way it is, but they are not shamans. There's a certain kind of duresse. Rather than being shamans in the sense of actually being priests, they're being initiated into something. That's an interesting sort of inverted shamanism. It's related to shamanism but it's coming from the other side, pulling you into something,

BI: How long has anyone been in the suits? You mention the people in Toronto.

VS: That was probably the longest at a single stretch. Apparently that was three hours long, but there is no limit as such.

EG: I've been in the Ubangi suit for a photoshoot, and that was probably about two hours. I had the bondage sleeve on for about an hour once to check out the movement on it and how it felt.

VS: The longest I've ever been in something is probably about two hours.

BI: Is that because there is a psychological arc that 'times' this stuff out?

EG: Almost any item of fetishwear is not designed to be worn for long periods of time. It is a process that one goes into, the act of getting into it and the act of being in it. And then there's the fact that after a period of time everyone wants to get out of it and into the bath and get the talc off.

VS: If you wanted to stay in this for 48 hours you have to make enough provisions for eating drinking, going to the bathroom and other stuff. You can't actually do that in a reasonably practical way at present.

EG: I think we have yet to meet somebody who wants to be inside. We're waiting to be approached by somebody who wants to be inside for a 48-hour period or a 12-hour period. But maybe 48 hours is pushing it a bit.

BI: Restriction obviously comes to the fore with these suits, but how do control of construction or restriction come into it? It's certainly not like bondage gear designed to be put on and taken off by one person. It seems to need a kind of staff of attendees.

EG: Most of them are laced at the back and zipped at the back, which involves someone else helping you into it. That means you're submissive. The wearer in about 90% of the suits is submissive.

VS: The image itself may be fairly aggressive perhaps and you know it becomes a kind of armour but even if you're wearing medieval armour, you probably can't get in and out of that yourself, you probably had people helping you so it's odd... it gives you both power and the feeling of being contained at the same time.

BI: We've talked about the idea of art versus practical. Do you see it diverging where you get more practical clothing spinning off? I mean, haute couture is all about creating something so amazingly expensive no one can buy it, but all the spin-offs from the process of making them is what hits the high street.

VS: We're trying to do that now as a matter of fact. E-Garbs and I have talked a lot about that.

EG: I think that's a very exciting channel to explore in the future: it's making the designs sleeker and more sophisticated, and each suit has many ideas in it through the angle of seams. It's all about taking a few ideas and putting them in one thing that isn't too overpowering to wear. Yes, we have been talking about it.

BI: So what would be the first type of clothes we would see? I saw some sketches on a wall somewhere.

EG: Yes, there is a design Van Saper has done that we both like a lot. It's basically a sling arm and it could work very well into quite a simple jacket, possibly a high-collared bolero, that would be the main striking feature. You look at it and you think it's a suit designed for someone with a broken arm or someone who just wants to have their arm in a sling.

> "They had to be cut out of it at the end, and all the genitalia and everything else are also done in this knitted material."

VS: And you can remove your arm from it and use it as a handbag that is attached to the jacket itself rather than being a separate item, so there's even a functional justification for it!

EG: Because it's aesthetically well made and beautiful, you would see the style of it first, then you would suddenly see the sling and it would give it a bizarre, perverted edge and I think that would be very pleasing.

BI: Is there enough of a fetishistic or perverted edge to fashion these days?

EG: Well yes, anyone reading the Body Probe book would know how the fetish scene has changed over the last five years and been sucked up by the mainstream and somewhat diluted but I think that's a good thing.

VS: I think that has happened and, you know what? I don't mind the dilution as you have this problem with fetishistic imagery to begin with as it tends to be stereotyped. Stereotype after a while and desensitises and becomes ordinary. It has to through sheer exposure so you have to find new sources. If ordinary fashion hadn't adopted what I call the normal standardised or what I would call cliché kinds of fetish imagery, forces one more to explore even newer realms to keep it fresh. So I don't mind the fact it's been co-opted by the mainstream.

BI: Some hard-core fetishists are getting off on Giger's creation in







"Species 2". There ultimate encompassing creation.

VS: These things at least from my own stand point I see them as garments people wear, I do not see them as special effects so that you pretend to be an alien.

BI: Who would your target audience be?

EG: Difficult question. There is no real target audience. I mean it's good to find people that appreciate the aesthetic forms, get in touch and remark on how beautiful they are. For me that's the motive really. I don't think we're going out there thinking "Hey, lets make loads of money!". We're not targeting an audience.

BI: That's why the question loops back to the location for something like this: is it on a catwalk or is it in a gallery? Where would you have a better reception for these pieces of work?

"you get people calling from really odd places around the world enquiring about one or the other of these peices"

EG: I'd possibly risk saying a gallery. But I'd be worried about showing work in a gallery context, because it just doesn't get to the kind of people I want to show to. So for me showing in a nightclub at a fashion show is my most direct hit.

VS: There is an interesting dichotomy, because aesthetically and qualitatively you want people to admire it in a certain setting, while at the other end of the spectrum you have a mass appeal you can only achieve at a nightclub.

EG: A mass appeal, or mass disgust. Or mass reaction.

VS: At least we will get that in most cases. I think there isn't a target audience, but what happens with each of these pieces that have appeared in magazines is that you get people calling from really odd places around the world enquiring about one or the other of these. There is always a different subset of a few people, so each one seems to reach a different audience. It's like a raw shock test of one's own expectation. So there's never a mass reaction but there is always some reaction.

BI: Also, a lot of people have not seen them, they have really only been exposed in the fetish press, and there is a vast area out there of people that would be interested for other reasons, apart from just viewing them as sex suits. Who are thus unaware of them ?

EG: Possibly the performing arts and movies could be two places where people would show interest in suits and costumes like that.

BI: You mentioned the ink blot test, which a good thing because we bring back interpretations of the subconscious being manifest. Have any psychologists seen any pictures of these costumes, and what would their reaction be?

VS: No psychologists, the closest is a cultural historian here in New York, a professor at one of the Universities here, Valerie Steele. She wrote a book on fetishism and fashion a few years ago. She saw some of the stuff and her take on it, to some extent, is from a cultural, psychological context.

EG: That could possibly be a target audience: psychologists. The suit could be used for sorting out your problems to a certain extent. It's like stress relief, perhaps they could be recommended by psychologists for some people.

BI: A safe externalisation.

BI:You use mainly leather as your material. Is there any kind of movement away from single-tone leather or do you want to keep them as solid colours with detailed stitch work?

EG: Well, we've talked about moulded rubber forms and I think on some of the suits, if other material was needed or looked like it would work better than leather, then we'd use it.

VS: In fact one piece we were talking about had three mouth openings. There would be a contrast in the details which we would probably have to make out of industrial parts.

BI: How did you guys find each other and start off?

VS: I was passing by E-Garbs's shop and was immediately drawn by the contents.

EG: That was about 93 and I didn't feel my pattern-cutting skills were up to being able to do the suits at that point. I looked around for other people to help me work on them and do the pattern cutting and couldn't find anyone who was prepared to take it on board. So I developed it and did it myself.

VS: But I'm glad that happened because I needed time too. Because that was the first time I was really under pressure to finalise ideas in a more definite and realistic way. So it was helpful to have that time.

BI: What do you both think that you bring into the equation as a group project?

EG: Well, Van Saper is the designer, and then I get involved and work through designs with him and put my input in, such as "Is this going to work? Can I do it?". But I always tell Van Saper that any of the suits are possible, but some things are going to be better than others for functional reasons. And I like to think I bring in the knowledge of pattern-cutting and how leather works into the equation.

VS: I think E-Garbs also brings a great deal more too, because his reaction to things helps definitely to confirm or validate a direction. If you just sit around in isolation and say "This is the way it's going to be" is negative, interaction is always a much more fruitful way to find out if there is anything really there.

BI: But the works that provoke visceral reactions are the ones you want to use.

VS: Yes, but also a reaction where E-Garbs says that it really works, it's not faking it.



EG: Also, it has to be a strong image and silhouette, and the idea needs to pull together. Some suits might have an outrageously good head piece, but less design on different parts of the body, so we work on them until they all pull together and the whole design works, interactive but self-contained.

BI: So, complete entity, as opposed to just focused on hands, boots or orifices?

VS: Yes.

BI: Are there any mainstream designers that either of you look to for catalysts or inspiration or elements?

EG: As for myself, there are no fashion designers I really think that I'd copy or take designs from. If I see someone has done a design that I like. Like McQueen having bum cracks out of the back of trousers, that's great, but what is the point of copying it? I take my ideas from people like the cartoonists Bilal and Moebius, who did some work for the film The Fifth Element. Also Michael Manning has outrageous ideas in the work with Van Saper, though, the ideas come from him and are then developed between us.

VS: There are quite a few mainstream designers I admire. And they're doing something quite different. I would say the real motivation comes from an early point in one's life when you see half-formed images that are striking. So I sometimes find that I like industrial clothing for example or a certain kind of chemical protection suits and stuff like that. Which people are interested in fetishistically. They sometimes have elements of both functionality and the plain unexpectedness of trying to address a function you don't run into in normal life.

BI: Like the "armourisation" of the body seeping into mainstream.

"there are no fashion designers I really think that I'd copy or take designs from"

VS: The catalyst in my case often comes from the misinterpretation of ordinary items. Looking at something hopefully thinking it's one thing, then finding out it's not, then trying to recover what I thought it was.

BI: Photographer Nick Knight is doing a lot with digital photography, where he is actually manipulating images to make Joan of Arc pierced through a bed of nails and extreme things along those lines. Would you consider it cheating to do that much with computers these days?

EG: No I wouldn't consider that cheating. He has just chosen to work



in a different medium.

VS: Yeah, I think that's right. I think anything goes. The stuff that E-Garbs and I have been doing is not invalidating what anyone else is doing. How would one invalidate H.R. Giger because his stuff is trying to look like an alien from another planet? Something we're not trying to do, you know?

EG: And I like to be able to walk around an object and feel it and sniff it, I think smell is very important. If you're looking at a computer screen you can't really smell the object on it.

VS: You know the word that comes to mind here? Going back to psychological terms again, the word 'empathic', the sensory kinesthetic effect of really holding on to something and having its physical reality interacting with you. In the future computers will take over that too.

BI: What are some of the themes you're both trying to explore with this project?

EG: Distortion, projection off from the body. If you like to be hooked up by the back of the head you're projecting off and questioning possibilities of re-designing the human form to a certain extent. Those are themes that we've explored so far.

VS: I am reminded of a quote that I keep coming back to. The painter Giorgio De Chirico on one of his self portraits had his motto in Latin, which translated came into "What shall I love if not the enigma?". That's it, what we are trying to do is enigmatic clothing.

BI: Given advanced biotechnology, will people look back to you guys and say 'Mmmm, I fancy this for a weekend?'

EG: Hopefully, yes.

BI: I think the current thing is to insert various types of shapes under the skin. Stelarc is still trying to create a third ear on the side of his head. People are inserting various steel objects under their skin to give a raised shape externally and one guy has had bayonet mounts on his skull to take different types of accesories.

"What shall I love if not the enigma?". That's it, what we are trying to do is enigmatic clothing"

VS: I think that kind of thing will increase for all kinds of reasons in the future. Some of them purely practical, like having a computer internally added to your suit.

EG: Devises like that could be internalised inside a suit. There was one that we did for our show where a metal bar comes out of the nose-mouth area down onto a kind of suction codpiece, which can be moved by the head working backwards and forwards. Ideas like that can be incorporated into the suits.

BI: Do you conceive a place where these things would roam free in their own environment as separate entities or would you perhaps stick to the clothing line with the idea that they are apparels, clothing for people as opposed to separate entities?

VS: No, I think at this time it's still clothing, because that's an excellent discipline for forcing your imagination. If one goes too far in the other direction - which by the way I am very interested in - you see an idea of autonomous evolution. In fact that is what computers are going to do in the future: they'll provide an exaggerated framework for evolving forms using genetic algorithms or whatever. I think that right now there is still a huge area to explore using primitive technology. The advantages with magic technology are that you can do anything and it all becomes just a matter of the programming or the wires. With leather you have to acutely work out the form and you get surprises.

EG: The way leather is treated these days and the different types you can get are not that primitive.





"I think that right now there is still a huge area to explore using primitive technology"

VS: What's not primitive is the way you put the pieces together. The material is very rudimentary in the sense that it has been around for millions of years really, but the geometry of the pattern-cutting, as E-Garbs says, is very sophisticated in its own right. Those are all very precise technical solutions at a simple level. But suppose you try to apply purposes that didn't exist there: that creates new forms that you're going to explore even though the material is old.

BI: You have arms and legs and head and eyes all in their appropriate place, but you haven't shifted the perception of those basic elements at all.

VS: Well that was deliberate. I really liked a comment that was made by Gaultier. When people were asking him about some of his more outlandish fashion he said "Look, the arms are where the arms are meant to be, the groin is where the groin is, the neck is where the neck is. If I move these things around, well where are you?" He didn't do that but I think there is some range of exploration.

EG: If we would move a suit's head, we'd obviously have tubes to breathe through, but if you wanted to see then you would have to have some kind of portable film camera built into the suit. Which is completely possible, we just haven't really explored that area, apart from discussing it.

VS: We have also discussed the ways of attaching two people to each other. Obviously we thought of the "69" thing.

EG: Yes there are quite a few suits like that, which is a very exciting angle. Suits for two people.

VS: There is a new book out about the cartoonist Stanton, where there's a cartoon about bondage gear, showing two people attached side by side like Siamese twins, which is an image I have seen before, and which a number of people have explored. I think you can even buy them in some stores. Regulation gives a sort of double-body feeling, which in itself has some limited appeal, but you could get more weird combinations. I once saw a photograph of a pair of Siamese twins who where joined at the head. Without wishing to make light of anyone's problems, it was a very suggestive shape, and one could imagine a double helmet. So there are interesting morphological possibilities.

EG: Then there's the design of two people in a wheelchair that I think works very well.

VS: Composites are definitely possible.

BI: How far ahead do you think you are from where fashion may be or may happen?

EG: I don't really see this work as fashion. Fashion designers may take certain elements from it, but it's too removed from the normal world that everyday people view to be classed as fashion. It could be seen as quirky and gimmicky if we did something like 'Sling Arm', because that would go over to fashion in the fetish arena of medical equipment and surgical implements, which would then at some point pass over into the McQueen's and Mugler's of fashion.

BI: Can you list your fetishistic catalyst you've had over the years? Van Saper mentioned Hallucegenia and Klinger's 'The Glove' in our last conversations.

EG: Well, artists like Gustave Moreau and Felicien Rops have inspired and excited me from an early age and they still do. As do symbolist art, comic book art and art brut.

VS: I think that's a good point. Comic-book artists are often closer in their intention than fashion designers to some of the stuff that we have been doing. E-Garbs made that point repeatedly over the years. There were affinities there. At first I didn't see that, as I wasn't thinking about it in that way, but I realised there are points of intersection with comic-book artists, because you know we too are creating stories.

EG: I can see quite a lot of Hans Belmer's ideas coming through Van Saper's designs.

VS: I mentioned people like Klinger or the painter De Chirico, who painted mannequins and dummies back in the early 20th Century, which often looked very fetishistic. You mention Moebius, and looking over his stuff there are things there I definitely relate to.

EG: My preferred catalysts are Bolivian brandy, and humour.

VS: I think the catalyst that I saw as a child was a person who was bandaged from head to toe in a mummy-like way. I saw a photograph when I was a kid and that was very disturbing to me at the time. I can think of a dozen or so images I saw before the ages of say 8 or 9 that have stayed with me ever since. If you're talking about real catalysts that genuinely transform other elements of your life, I think those images are at the root of it.

Photo credits:
Black side profile:www.peruinc.com Last page spiral:Mark Bennett
All others:Nicolas Sinclaire

Designers:House of Harlot www.houseofharlot.com (0207) 700 1441
E-Garbs www.masks.co.uk egarbs@themail.co.uk
Expanded from: Body Probe - David Wood Editor Creation Books



Installation: Polyphon Date: 2001 The artists: Artstation Commissioners: Fabrica

Red Japan

Jack Sargeant
& Andrew Leavold

1.The First World democracies survive under the illusion of a better world, a shiny future in which capitalist democracy is our manifest destiny. In our collective fantasies Japan has always epitomised that future utopia, but already the dream is darkening into nightmare reality...

As post-modernist philosophers described the "crisis of narratives"[1] and "incredulity toward metanarratives"[2] that defined our cultural condition, their disciples celebrated Japan, and Tokyo in particular, as the place in which the future would take root[3].

Japan has been a source of fascination since the country was first 'opened' to trade with the West in the 1850s. And since the 1960s it has increasingly been perceived, at least in the West's ethnocentric gaze, as the land of the near future. Japan was the zone from which the mise-en-scene of the global future was increasingly drawn: giant public video screens, the mass-proliferation of digital technologies, high speed trains, exotic women (seen as sophisticated yet submissive), and, perhaps most importantly, gratifying consumerism free from the existential nausea of Europe.

In the nineties, however, the Japanese economic bubble burst, and by the end of 2001 unemployment had risen to an unprecedented 5.4% - the highest ever recorded: "The employment situation is severe," finance minister Shiokawa said at the end of that year, "the 5.4% jobless rate is harsh."[4]

Meanwhile the suicide rate steadily increased. To 16.8 per 100,000 population (compared to 11.3 per 100,000 in the USA). Although - contrary to popular belief - this is not the highest suicide rate in the world (Russia's is almost three times as high), Japan is notable for its suicide rate amongst middle-aged males (70% of suicides in 2000 were male[5]), many of whom have to deal with the failure associated with bankruptcy and unemployment and chose death rather than shame.

But it is not just the economic changes that represent a paradigm shift in Japanese culture. Long considered a relatively safe country (at least when compared to Northern Europe and America), Japan has been deeply scarred by a sharp increase in violent crime, which increased by 25% in the first eleven months of 2000[6], especially among young people. The reasons for this rise have been attributed to numerous social pressures, including kireru ("snap off"), a term used to describe young people suddenly losing it and lashing out in unrestrained blood lust.

While the shootings at American schools have caused massive shock, the unleashed brutality of Japanese children represents a visceral engagement with terror that often surpasses even the gun-blasts that decimated Columbine High School in 1999. In January 1998 a thirteen-year-old student stabbed a teacher to death with a butterfly knife; the teacher had reprimanded the student for being late. In February 1998 a sixty-nine-year-old man was kicked to death by two girls aged fourteen and fifteen. In May 1998, a fourteen-year-old schoolboy decapitated an eleven-year-old girl and impaled her head on the school's gate. While these cases are the most notorious there are numerous other incidents of stabbings, rapes, and homicides amongst the country's youth.

2.Japanese cinema has produced numerous films that explore and articulate this cultural shift, but the two most successful, both nationally and internationally, were Battle Royale (2000, Kinji Fukasaku) and The Ring (1999, Dong-bin Kim). The changing economy, cultural shift and the perceived move from order to a more brutal society is marked throughout these films. Moreover, both focus on the annihilation and desiccation of youth in a culture that demands obedience and punishes failure. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Battle Royale begins with the suicide of a father, his final note urging his son to success.
Battle Royale, based on a Manga comic but owing much of its narrative to The Lord of the Flies, is set in the Japan of the near-future. In this world young people are kept in line through an annual event at which a class of children - chosen for their bad behaviour - are taken to an abandoned island, armed with 'weapons', ranging from frying pans to poisons to machine-guns, and ordered to kill each other in a brutal test. Only one student can survive this ritual of actualised Social Darwinism. The film was a massive success.

Similarly horror hit Ring, based on a popular novel by Koji Suzuki, was spawned from Japan's rich culture of grotesque sex, body mortification and apocalyptic horror - no surprise that the audience, primarily between school age and their early thirties and reared on a heady diet of Manga atrocities and video nasties, was eagerly lying in wait. The film draws on a number of horror traditions. The black and white Japanese ghost story, so popular in the immediate post-war period, was a simple yet effective revenge fantasy. Also apparent are the recent Western influences, the puzzle box mystery of Clive Barker's Hellraiser and the dream logic of Wes Craven's Nightmare On Elm Street series (not to mention the undeniable stink of "franchise" - numerous sequels and spin-offs exist, and Hollywood is planning its own Ring remake).

There is, however, something else at work in both The Ring and Battle Royale - a deep cynicism and hopelessness, coupled with a sense of impending self-destruction, that harks back to a more underground aesthetic little seen in the cultural mainstream.

Peek just underneath the cloying film culture of kiddie-friendly robots and flying turtles and you will discover a soiled layer of brutal sex and horror films, magazines, videos and even video games, all sharing a philosophy of humiliation and self-defeat which seems closer to the real shared psyche of post-war Japan. As censorship relaxed in the early sixties the country was awash with its own brand of lyrical, depressing pornography known as 'pink films'. Sample titles roughly translate as Inflatable Sex Doll Of The Wastelands and The Embryo Hunts In Secret, reflecting the wild collision of art, angst and naked flesh in the hands of a new generation of film school directors well versed in New Wave cinema, modern poetry, surrealism and death. In Europe and America the Sixties was a period in which all but the willing few pornographers and their audiences dared to venture beyond the peek-a-boo formula. In a typical Japanese 'pink' film scenario, a young female willingly subjects herself to all manner of humiliation at the hands of her tormentor before fulfilling her duty to commit hara-kiri. Sex, blood, death. Please come again.



Versus (2000)
Dir: Ryuhei Kitamuri
Wr: Ryuhei Kitamuri, Yudai Yamaguchi

Is the fresh slew of Japanese zombie films a form of organic media Pokemonicide? Perhaps. Are they an atavistic reflection of urges long-buried in the national psyche? Could be. Do they flying kick oozing, rotten butt? Certainly.

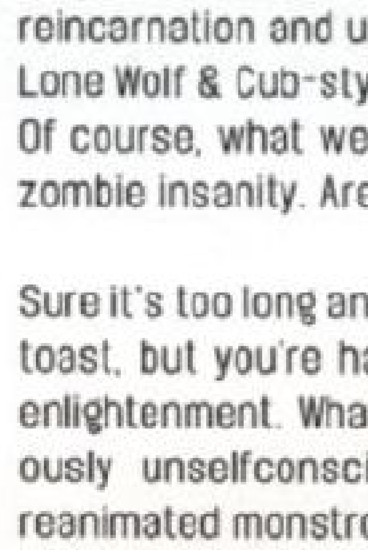
Lucio Fulci is yet to rise groaning from his grave, while George Romero is still prevaricating over a projected fourth "Dead" flick. The only zombie film we're likely to see in the meantime Paul Anderson's Resident Evil computer game tie-in, and regardless of how enthusiastic the fan reviews are, I'm still getting over Shopping. So what's a spurt-starved zombie fan to do? Why, go East, my fiend.

The toweringly superior of these two offerings is first-time director Ryuhei Kitamuri's Versus, which describes itself as "Free-fall Ultra-Violence Non-Stop Entertainment Action". Insert "A Little Overlong" and you'd have a good one-line review.

The plot could be written down on the back of a Gameboy cartridge: escaped convicts are met by slick and treacherous yakuza-types at a pre-arranged meeting point - The Forest of Resurrection. Earth Mysteries enthusiasts will know that place names are often clues to a location's past, and this eerie forest is no exception. In fact it's one of the 666 gateways to hell located around the world - number 444 if memory serves. It's also this yakuza crew's regular dumping ground for offed opponents who, clearly not having mass-ressurrection in mind, they buried along with their loaded weapons. It must be a yakuza thing. Meanwhile, an awkwardly injected sub plot about reincarnation and ultimate destinies allows for some fantastic Lone Wolf & Cub-style ultraviolent medieval samurai swordplay. Of course, what we really want is a whole film of samurai-vs-zombie insanity. Are you listening Kitamuri?

Sure it's too long and about as intellectually challenging as cold toast, but you're hardly likely to walk into this expecting Zen enlightenment. What we have here is an incredibly slick, joyously unselfconscious no-brainer, a bewilderingly athletic, reanimated monstrosity constructed from still dripping chunks of Sam Raimi, Peter Jackson, John Woo, Sam Peckinpah and Quentin Tarantino. Pumped through the screen by a primal techno soundtrack, the film oozes visual style as the camera darts around the woods like a midget in rocket-boots. In Versus' world a punch doesn't just break your jaw, it piles right through your face, leaving a gaping red hole for the camera to stare through. Characters lose limbs like the rest of us lose hair; guns never run out of ammo and black leather jackets are the ultimate fashion statement. Slick and sick.

Hopefully someone will have the sense to pick up Versus for distribution in the West. If not there are DVDs knocking around on eBay. We can also look forward to Alive, Kitamuri's offering for 2002, described simply as "exploding". Boom. Watch this space.



Junk (1999)
Dir: Atsushi Muroga

Junk predates Versus by a year or so and is stumbling, clumsy B-movie fare in comparison - Zombie Flesheaters to Versus' Evil Dead. Punky, junky, jewel thieves hide out in a disused warehouse awaiting more treacherous yakuzas. Unfortunately for them, this

The Japanese Horror films of the Seventies finally ended their fascination with ghosts and ill-placed gothic elements (Toho's Dracula trilogy for instance - the Count did not travel well) and began to evolve with its jaded audience, incorporating the pink film aesthetics of humiliation and annihilation. Nastiest of all was the big-budget Star Of David: Beauty Hunting (1979), the tale of a young disturbed man who competes with his rapist father to see who can deal out the most suffering on his fiancée. The young man wins and kills his father, then makes love with his battered and piss-drenched bride-to-be. After carrying out her social obligation she heads to the torture chamber and hangs herself[7].

The video revolution of the Eighties led to a second explosion in the film underground, this time with cheaply produced porn and gore, often on screen at the same time. Perverse splatter epics like Entrails Of A Virgin and Evil Dead Trap were the live action mutations of sex-and-death animé like Urotsokidoji the Overfiend and Wicked City. Shot-on-video, the Guinea Pig series takes the Japanese obsession with sex and death one step further. In the third episode, Flowers Of Flesh And Blood, a masked protagonist clad in a samurai outfit ritually dismembers a drugged and naked girl on a table. With a samurai sword and a hacksaw. For half an hour. The effects are hideously and anatomically life-like to the point where some are convinced they are witnessing a snuff movie. The actress squirms in pain (or at least real discomfort) and coughs up blood while honourably accepting her fate. It's a kind of 'seppuku porn' which flourishes in jaded horror fanboy circles and seventh-generation video dupe mail-order catalogues to this day.

Ring and Battle Royale are far from 'seppuku porn', but they do reflect the hidden culture of suicide and hopelessness. In both films the characters are doomed from the start due to factors beyond their mortal control, and spend the duration of each film counting down their own annihilation.
In Ring the harbinger of death is a supernatural video virus, spread like a computer bug from one victim to another. A group of students stumble on a video of a public access broadcast showing what appears to be an old crippled woman emerging from a well in a forest. As soon as the signal ends, the victim gets a phone call with the message: you have seven days to live before suffering an agonizing end. This fate is only hinted at by the grotesquely contorted death masks on the victims' faces.

A reporter investigates the rumour that high school students are throwing themselves, lemming-like, in front of video tapes of the broadcast. She too watches the video, transfixed by the image of the crippled woman. It comes as no shock when the phone rings. The grainy, choppy black and white footage (a nod to Ring's underground heritage) contains the coded answers to the witch's origins, as well as the seeds of her own destruction. Thus begins the seven-day countdown to her pre-ordained demise. 'Day One', 'Day Two' - the title cards have the same sense of foreboding as the on-screen body count in Battle Royale. As with Paul Schrader's Mishima, which tells the story of the celebrated Japanese writer who committed hara-kiri, you can't help but be a willing participant in someone else's own death preparations.

Unlike Battle Royale, which ends on an oddly optimistic note, Ring (like all truly great horror films - The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Cannibal Holocaust, etc) has a very real apocalyptic feel. The open-ended finale allows for the inevitable rush of sequels and prequels while training its camera on a strange and discoloured horizon. The sense of doom is palpable. The virus will flourish. More people will die.

Is this the message Japanese youth culture is feeding off? In Battle Royale, death is almost a welcome escape from the prospect of the forty-odd years of slavery that adulthood promises. The film explores the systemic destruction of youth more fully than any film since Pasolini's Salo. In both films the middle-aged annihilate youth in a world which exists slightly beyond the commonplace both geographically and psychically.

The 'adult' is represented at first as the fascist government of the near-future which mirrors Japan's growing militarization and, more pointedly, by the stern paternal figure of 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano. He plays his future self - once a director, actor and all-round renaissance man, now a tired Big Brother figure presiding over the three day human hunt. To the main female character he is every girl's father: a protector, a harsh disciplinarian handing out punishment at the touch of a button, and more disturbingly an almost welcome sexual predator that haunts her dream world.

For the Grade Nine class of cheerleaders, good girls, jocks, overachievers and social misfits, the all-seeing Kitano's breath is always on the back of their necks. Some hang themselves or jump happily off a cliff, hands joined, defying the harsh parent's rules and refusing to become one of them. Others discover the warrior in themselves and go down, machine guns or scythes aloft, in a blaze of raging hormones, unrepentant blood-lust and teenage exuberance. For the teens in both films, death is an almost orgasmic release.

In these two films the doom, violence and dystopian themes of Japanese underground and exploitation movies have punctured the mainstream. They have revealed to a growing international audience a critical velocity inspired by the changing socio-political climate of modern Japan. The films - and others like them - represent an ongoing eruption of horror onto cinema and television screens that continues unabated, offering an unhealthy but necessary alternative to the tired formulaic teen-fodder of Scream, I Know What You Did Last Summer and their ilk.



was the base for a secret military reanimation programme, powered by what looks like the same luminous goo used by Herbert West in Reanimator. Junk's slowly-but-gorely approach harks back to the post Dawn of the Dead spaghetti-splatter fests of the late '70s and early '80s, even borrowing from their synth-goth soundtracks. On seeing Junk it's easy to assume that for every Ring or Versus that crosses the Pacific to Western acclaim, there are several that don't make it, either because they'd be too alien to Westernised palates, or as in this case, they're not all that good. It's certainly gory and entertaining enough, it also features a large-breasted naked female uber-zombie whose hair changes colour when she's angry. But the Italians did this sort of thing a lot better a long time ago. Junk is unlikely to get a European or US release, but is available from select Ebay vendors.
Mark Pilkington



Wild Zero (2000)
Dir: Tetsuro Takeuchi
Wr: Satoshi Takagi

I gotta admit, I'm a sucker for a good love story. A good love story with zombies is even better. And a good love story with zombies and hard-drinking, leather-clad Japanese band Guitar Wolf would just about be cinematic perfection in my strange little world. Luckily for me, Japanese music-video director Takeuchi Tetsuro made WiLD ZERO in 1999, and it is everything I could ever possibly want it to be and more. I mean, how often do you see a movie with a credit for "Rock'n'Roll Transliteration?" Other bonus features include excessive drinking, excessive hair-combing, and excessive exploding heads.

As you might guess, the plot of WiLD ZERO is awesomely chaotic. A crash-landed UFO has started turning the residents of a small Japanese town into zombies. Meanwhile, a young Guitar Wolf fan named Ace stops for gas in the area on his way to a Guitar Wolf show. (The movie has quite a bit of live Guitar Wolf that does little to advance the plot but is a hell of a lot of fun nevertheless.) Ace meets and falls for a mysterious young girl named Tobio who turns out to have a very big secret. Unfortunately, they very quickly run into the zombies. Fortunately, Seiji of Guitar Wolf happens to be Ace's rock'n'roll blood brother and the band shows up driving a muscle car and a motorcycle that shoot fire. However, a hot pants-wearing club manager called the Captain is a little pissed off at the band over an earlier violent altercation, and he's chasing them with an armload of guns. Oh, and there are subplots involving yakuza and a crazy female arms dealer, and a group of bored and jobless Japanese youth who have nothing better to do than venture into the countryside to gawk at crash-landed UFOs. In grand zombie-movie style, everyone ends up in the same place at the same time, and then the real fun begins.

Believe it or not, WiLD ZERO is actually a classic zombie movie in the tradition of George Romero and Peter Jackson's Dead Alive. (Dedicated gorehounds will notice lots of bits plundered from other movies, but this just adds to the fun.) It is genuinely low-budget - rumour has it that the largest production expense was the beer. This is not true, of course, since all of those exploding heads look to have been done with CGI. There are some more traditional gore effects too - the zombies are particularly delightful. It has courtesy breasts. And it's chock-full of climactic showdowns, violent rampages and triumphant moments. It even has an excellent soundtrack featuring Guitar Wolf and an unbelievable number of other Japanese and American bands. In short, WiLD ZERO might not exactly be a "good" movie, but that doesn't stop it from being one of the most awesome movies ever made.
Kat Valdes

1.Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, A Report On Knowledge, Manchester University Press, p.xxiii.
2.Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, A Report On Knowledge, Manchester University Press, p.xxiv.
3.See, for example, the numerous cyberpunk texts [literary and cinematic] that mark Japan as in some way intrinsically futuristic.
4.'US fears deepen over severity of slump', Charlotte Denny and Heather Stewart, *The Guardian*, Saturday December 1, 2001.
5.'Japan Combats Suicide Rate', *BBC News*, World: Asia-Pacific, Tuesday, 4 September, 2001.
6.Tim Larimer, 'Japan's Wild Ones', *Time*, vol. 157, no 1, January 8, 2001.
7.See Jack Hunter, *Eros In Hell*, Creation Books, for a thorough exploration



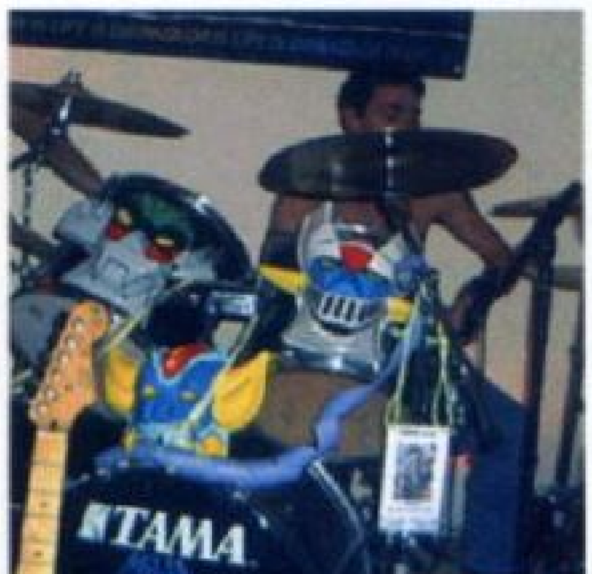
MIWA, her components and 70 screwed-up Italian kids

By Emilia Telese

A band. A punk and ska band. A punk and ska band doing covers. A punk and ska band doing covers of Italian versions of 70's Japanese animation series theme songs. What? Well, their fans may be the epitome of the niche market, but they do exist, and they have merchandise in their bedrooms to prove it. Miwa E I Suoi Componenti are alive and thriving in the heart of Tuscany's underground ironic music scene.

The bands' name (meaning Miwa and her components) comes straight from one of the above-mentioned robot-themed cartoon series which populated the dreams of millions of 70's born Italian children: Kotetsu Jeeg (Steel [robot] Jeeg) in which the sexy minidress-clad Miwa propels Jeeg's components in the air towards pilot Hiroshi, busy turning into a robot head in the air after jumping from his white motorbike to a handy nearby precipice. He then slots everything in place, not without a further death-defying somersault or two and a liberatory stretch of his shiny steel legs, ready to fight evil Queen Himika. 46 episodes, 46 white motorbikes lying at the bottom of the precipice.





As one of those 70's Italian kids, I know what went into Miwa's mind and why a Tuscan punk-ska band love playing her tune. Italy was literally swamped, conquered and mesmerised by Japanese cartoon series in that period, finding fertile soil in the post-economic boom families and provoking frenzied minds and even national parliament rage towards horribly violent programmes, that looked all the same. At least that's what our parents wanted to think, unable to realise that in fact the entire Japanese production of animation series since 1962 had been crammed into Italian TV channels the state-owned RAI and the numerous pioneer private one - every day, for years on end, resulting in 1976-1983 into something like 15,700 hours of Anime broadcasting. That's 6 hours a day, 365 days a year, for 7 years. And that was only the beginning.



This marketing move was hugely lucrative for merchandise sellers but certainly bad for the image of Anime. The series were quickly translated and dubbed in Italian, often by the same actors, so they frequently sounded the same, and of course they sometimes looked the same, considering that many series were produced by the same studios, and re-runs of successful ones were infinite (Lupin Sansei is still being shown every day at 1pm since the late Eighties, despite the series ending in 1985).

The Italians realised only too late that Japanese animation is not only aimed at a child audience, but ranges from the kiddy to the kinky. In the early 80's, censorship was introduced for the sake of consumption and of a homogenised goody-goody Disney ideal. Culprit series were chopped and deprived of any "psychological threat" and juicy bits- instead of being shown at different time slots for different age groups' audiences, like they are in Japan. This kept the merchandising sellers happy (and willingly paying for TV ads) and the kids wondering why the stories didn't always make sense.

But by then, an entire generation had already enjoyed the non-censored days of animation, and were now buying the unabridged home video versions. Kids grew, Miwa E I Suoi Componenti started playing in Tuscan underground clubs.

Miwa openly admit that their band is an ironic-hearted, loving tribute to 70's Japanese cartoons. At concerts they often wear purpose-made Animecostumes (something better known in Japan as cos-play) but being every inch the guitar-smashing, eardrum-destroying kind of punk-rock band, seeing them on stage is as bizarre as finding all the Marvel heroes fully caped and leotarded in a London club doing drugs and playing Pretty Vacant.

Their songs might be sometimes nave, yet Miwa see their music as a duty to the generation of those Italian kids, now in their twenties, who were happily screwed up by non-censored Anime and who would do it all over again, for the sake of good fun, brilliant stories and rockin' bass guitar riffs.

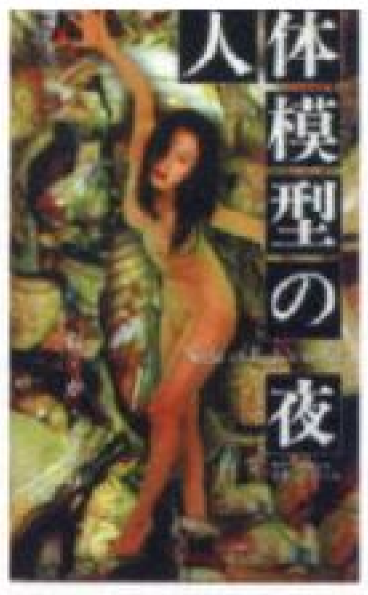
God Save Gakeen!



Since writing this article the author has been head-hunted by a Venitian Manga Punk band to tour Italy this summer as vocalist dressed as anime character Lum.

Links:

www.miwa.it
www.miwa.it (band)
www.mangaitalia.it
www.mangaitalia.it (Italian manga portal, lots of links)
www.benkyo.it
www.benkyo.it (Italian anime fans site)
www.hinomaru.megane.it/Cartoni/Jeeg/
www.hinomaru.megane.it/Cartoni/Jeeg/ (images of the Jeeg series)



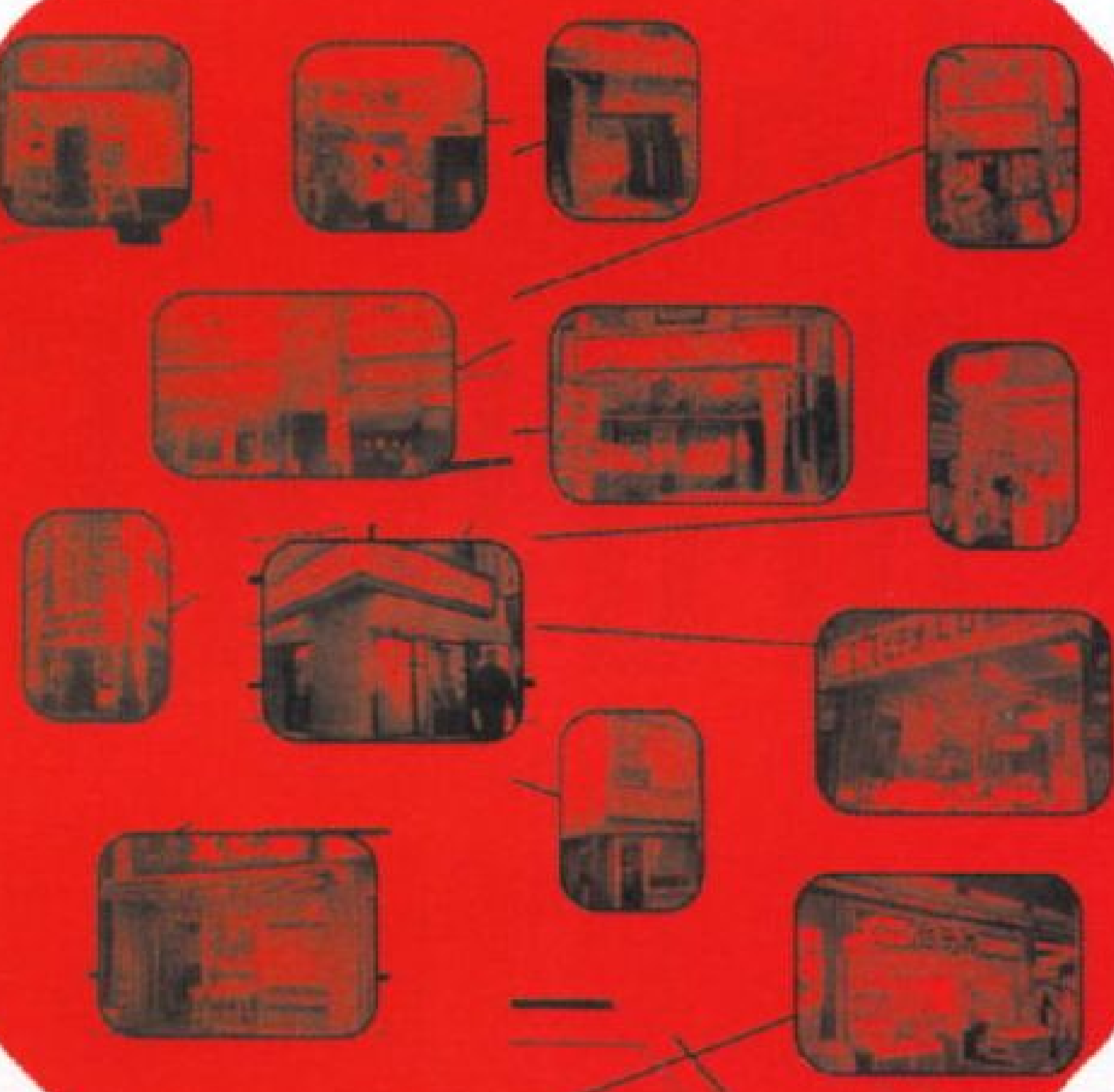
JINBOCHO

A Video Collector's Dreamland

Cameron Scholes

When I first came to Tokyo I went - as most collectors do their first time here - to Akihabara to buy my toys. And although I found a great many items, the area was seriously lacking in shops that sold used videocassettes. At that time I never knew about Jinbocho; a small shopping paradise in the centre of Tokyo not ten minutes from Akihabara. Today I can only cringe at the thought of what I probably passed up as a result of my not knowing. Fortunately, you need not make the same mistakes as me.

Accessible from either Suidobashi Station on the Yamanote line or the Hanzomon subway line (that exits in the centre of Jinbocho), this area is renowned for several things.



For years the area, also referred to as the Kanda book district, has been a haven for book collectors. The main strip and adjoining side roads are littered with book shops. But today the famous Kanda book district/Jinbocho area is also home to a bastion of stores catering to collectors of used videos, rare records, pop music culture, and anime / manga / Godzilla related subjects. There are also a pronounced number of adult speciality shops that are packed to the walls with magazines, photos, posters, books, and ad campaign collectibles. Everything is pricey here, but if money is no obstacle you'll need at least a couple of days to explore and soak in everything. And don't forget to bring a big backpack to carry all the stuff.

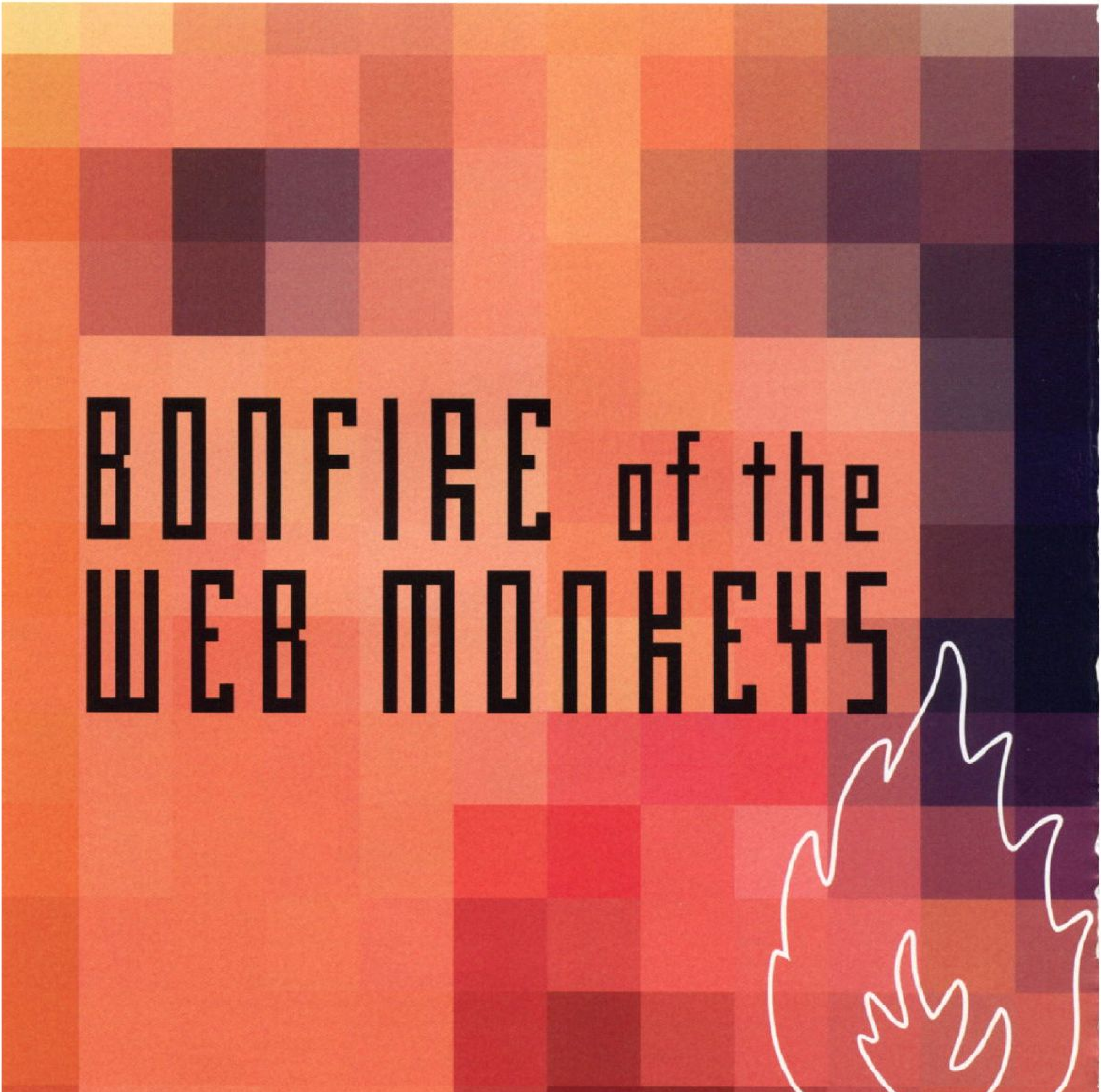
The one of the best stores in Jinbocho for used videos is called Gekiyasu Bideo (which translates as, "very cheap video"), and it is located just outside and to the left of the A5 exit of Jinbocho Station. This shop has two floors of used tapes for sale. On the first floor there is a wide selection of generic American video titles, some anime, USA TV series' (X-files etc), and a good selection of Japanese releases of Hong Kong films. But it's on the second floor where the real meat and potatoes are found. This floor you find the horror, sci-fi, the choice anime, music videos, sports, and the Japanese erotic thrillers and B-movies. The selection is quite good and is rotated from month to month (so frequent visiting is a must). However, like many stores in Jinbocho the prices at Gekiyasu Bideo tend be on the expensive side, especially for the erotic Japanese thrillers and horror titles. Don't be surprised if you are confronted with price tags in the neighbourhood of $65 and $75 dollars for hard-to-find horror and sci-fi titles, as well as Japanese erotic thrillers. In Jinbocho that's the going rate.

In total there are about 16 used video stores in the area (more if you count porn shops). And while some of the stores use mainstream videos as window dressing for their huge porn inventory in the back, it is sometimes worthwhile to explore them anyway, as you never know what some idiot is going to chuck into a $10 bin. And of course, if you are into porn, these stores offer the prospect of being doubly rewarding.

Jinbocho also has a wide variety of Idol shops, that is, shops that sell teen idol advertising, books, videos, and general paraphernalia. But like most stores in Jinbocho you have to prowl around and explore the area in order to uncover these shops. Many of them are shops above street level, or in buildings on the 5th floor. It takes a bit of work, but the rewards are well worth it.

Happy Hunting.

BONFIRE of the WEB MONKEYS



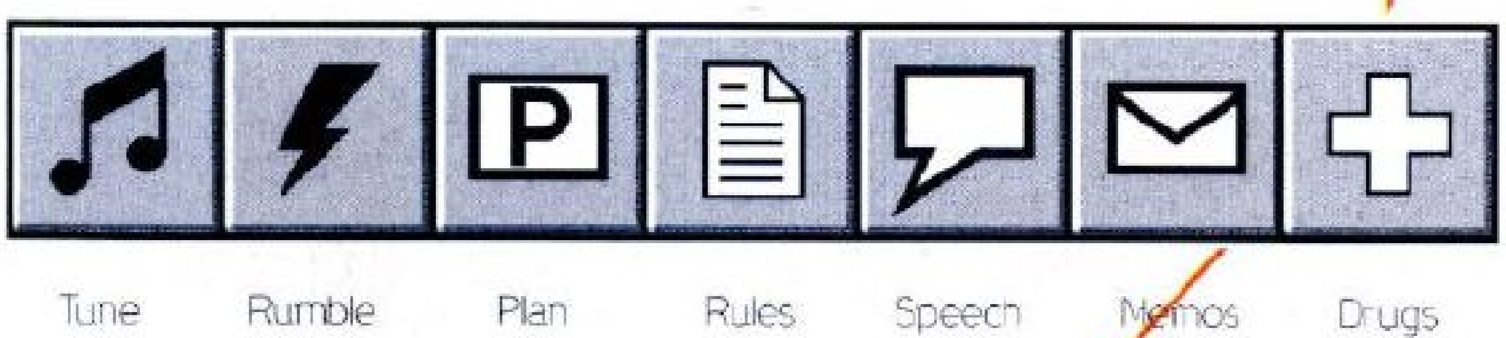
(CORPRATE BUT FUNKY)

So what was the rise of the Internet like? Here's one person's Readers Digest perspective on the whole circus. Five years squashed into twenty minutes.

By Damien Drake

A wise man once said, "If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bullshit." As new and 21st Century as the Internet was heralded as being, in the end it was all sameshit different day. If you get bored you can always go through the article circling Bullshit Bingo point winning words and phrases.

From buddies to friends to teammates to colleagues to total-strangers... On your marks! Get set! Go! ›





Buddies ...



The only way is up! - Yazz

Q: What's the big idea?

A: Get some money. Start a company. See where it goes. Have a laugh. There's gold in them thar hills!

Rules of Business Chapter XII Sub Section VI Paragraph III: Think of yourself and others as a single unit made up of a myriad of skills waiting to be utilized. Surround yourself with self-motivated intelligent people rather than sycophants. Lead them in the direction of the challenges you face. Monitor rather than direct. Do not fear the future. Trust others.

Once upon a time there was a flaky little guy who wanted to be rich. Rich! He had heard of a new American sensation called 'the Internet' and figured that if a well off friend could throw him some seed money he could set up a thing-called a Web Design Company, whatever the hell that was.

Flaky Guy: Didn't you hear about that guy in New York who got $10, 000 for designing one web page?"

Flaky Guy had a friend who was a Money Monkey (think of Simian financial advisor dancing in a little red jacket) who had some spare cash lying around. They cut a deal, enabling Flaky Guy to become, ta-dah, Web Designer Guy.

Web Designer Guy knew enough to know he didn't know much so he decided to employ someone who knew more technical stuff than he did.

Employing Mr. Technical worked for a while but soon building a simple web page wasn't just a case of that weird lingo called HTML. Now there were other issues: programming languages, Java, tables, forms and Lord knows what else on the horizon. Java and Tables and Forms oh my!

Web Designer Guy decided to employ a programmer type, a super coder, who was not only technical but also hungry to prove himself in the rapidly evolving web world. Historically hungry usually meant cheap too, so that was nice. Web Designer Guy found his man and quickly employed him (and yes he was cheap). This Super Coder was a marvel. Rivers of code flowed over once barren webpages, ideas became realities and prospective clients became grateful clients, eager to recommend the team to others, eager to pay.

Flushed with success the Web Designer Guy did it all over again and employed a Design Demon. Success again. The Super Coder built nice new sites for the company. The Design Demon made them look pretty. Before you knew it the company itself had a logo and the beginnings of a look and feel, a brand. Programming bells and designery whistles.

Web Designer Guy: This isn't about making money. It's about changing the world.

Email to all:

> That green tin in my bottom drawer is now officially our Petty Cash. If you need to buy a prospective client a coffee or a sandwich take the cash from there but do remember the receipt.
> Web Designer Guy.

Mr. Technical wasn't too happy. His passion for the Internet couldn't cover up the fact that it was all getting a bit too deep for him. In a desperate moment he did some naughty moonlighting and then one Monday morning he wasn't there anymore.

Web Designer Guy: Okay, I'm the boss on paper but I want you guys to know that I believe in a level playing field. We'll just all do whatever needs doing. Don't think of me as your boss. I'm just another player on the team.

So the Design Demon designed, Super Coder programmed and Web Designer Guy talked shit on the phone. The jobs rolled in. All they needed was a real project manager, a veritable Schmooze Wizard to keep the clients happy and wanting more, and a deep code Sys Admin guy to free up the SuperCoder who was drowning in network issues.

"Hey, check it a out. This guy's half way round the world and wants to know if we need a schmooze wizard?"

"Really? Well here's an email from someone so into networking it's almost not human. Wants to know if we're interested."

Sometimes life is like that.

Email to all:

> Friday night is company booze up night! See you at the bar!
> Boss Guy
> (formerly Web Designer Guy)

Time for a quick weekend in the country. Just alcohol and hash. Nothing too demanding.

Boss Guy: You know what my goal is? To own my own personal spacestation. <everyone laughs except Boss Guy>

So now they were five. Not Human was doing his thing making the server unusable at peak times of the day ...

"..at least it's secure!"

... while Schmooze Wizard was proving to be a mighty asset with every client he touched, turning into open checkbook with a smiley face. He had faint writing on his forehead, which read 'Future Director'. Talking of future Directors it was about now that an Affable Bullshitter arrived to help the Boss Guy with Sales leads.

They needed a programmer who can talk to clients. Suddenly in the doorway, a programmer, looking friendly ...

"Need someone to steer the programming? Fancy a drink? Great mate!"

So some more brilliant programmers arrived and then the lads got a shock. A Pretty Woman joined the team (a real live girl!). Initially she just answered the phones and made tea (of course), despite having more academic qualifications than the Boss Guy, but soon it became apparent that she was probably going to be the best Project Manager they'd ever have. Then he joined and him and him and him and her and...

Boss Guy: I don't want to be the boss man at the top of some old school business pyramid. It doesn't need to be that way. We all do the work so we all get the credit. We all get the glory. We're a team. We don't even need our titles on the business card. Just your name and the company name is fine. Pint of Fosters, wasn't it?

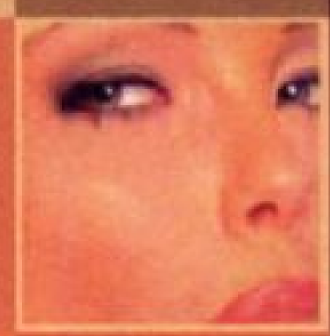
Email to all:

> Party in the countryside! Bring a tent. Bring drugs. Bring booze. Bring a camera. Bring friends. Naked wrestling in the inflatable pool...
> Boss Guy

Rumble rumble rumble: Do you think the Boss Guy is up to this? I didn't see any kind of business plan on my way in? Who's in charge? Where are we going?

This was the good ole days. Somehow despite the lack of an HR department, a Board of Directors, a pretty carpet with our logo on, company expense sheets, individual businesscards, ambient lighting, a variety of different sized meeting rooms or a plan of any kind it just sort of rock 'n' rolled it's way forward. Oh, okay, I lied. There was a plan.







Boss Guy: It's really very simple. The higher up the foodchain you go, both within an organization and in terms of the size of organizations themselves, the less people know. Also the bigger the company the more money they have to blow on a new website.Therefore we need to keep aiming for the big blue-chip companies.

Schmooze Wizard: This might work because if you think about it to make-big money with the Internet it's either aim for the cutting edge or aim for blue chips. You don't need to do both. Big blue chips are notoriously cautious and slow to change so if we want their business we don't need to be at the front of the pack, just aware of what's ahead.

The Plan: Always aim for the high ground.

So they did and before they knew it they were serving clients that even the Design Demon had heard of. People couldn't wait to get to work and once there had a hard time convincing themselves to leave. Everything was exciting. That new client. This new site. That new technology. This large pepperoni pizza from last night. Talking of pizza - POP! - Overnight an occasional shared pizza bought by the boss became an Indian take-way for twelve, plusbeers. Nice!

Person: Did you see that loser from the big Web Design competition, giving TV and Press interviews like he's some big shit? How much do you think that ad in The Times cost?

Boss Guy: That's a sign that you on the way out, when you start to believe your own press. We won't give interviews, we won't do trade shows and we won't do awards shows. We'll just stick to doing the work.

Person: Hurrah! Mine's a pint of lager. Cheers chief!

Boss Guy: No, I mean it. I'm serious. Running about like a god amongst men is the last thing you'll see me doing.

Q: What the hell just happened?

A: Got some money. Started a company. Found some friends. Found some clients. Made a bit of money. Had a laugh!

Friends ...

Money! It's a gas. Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash. - Pink Floyd

Q: What's the big idea?

A: Get bigger clients. Get more good people. Make more money. Continue having fun.

Rules of Business Chapter XII Sub Section VI Paragraph III: Think of yourself and others as a single unit made up of a myriad of skill-waiting to be utilized by you. Surround yourself with self-motivated intelligent people rather than sycophants. Lead them in the direction of the challenges you face. Monitor rather than direct most of the time. Do not fear the future. Trust others.

> InterOffice Memo:
> It gives me great pleasure to announce that the Schmooze Wizard is now Director of the Company. He'll take care of Production Issues leaving me to deal with Sales issues.
> The Boss Guy.

And so all the small fears that the Boss Guy is not in the finest mental health to lead the company were happily drunk into oblivion. The Schmooze Wizard was just the voice of reason we needed. Boss Guy was in charge but it was clear who the power behind the throne was. Hurrah! Have another drink!

Enter the Prince of Darkness, Awesome Sales, with his techno Watson, Rabid Sales, who between them can make the dead wake up and sign a contract. Sales go zoom! So now there are over twelve eager beavers rushing to work each morning, all happy to be alive, all believing that dreams can come true. The big new office space is already feeling like one day it'll be too small.

Boss Guy: If you're staying late tonight grab a cab home if you can't be bothered getting the train. Here's our account number.

Then one day there's a box of cards on your desk. Are they from a client? No! Your name! Company Logo! Personalized business cards.

Person: Last week I was a graduate. Now I'm a senior Web Programmer. Go figure.

Somehow just saying it made it so. People wanted their little pot'o' gold so much that when you talked a bit about the web's potential relatively sane individuals chose to believe where normally they would have questioned. You could walk into a room of twenty-year veterans and say "Bollox!" regardless of what was being said and get away with it. Indeed most of what was said was bollox, at least the stuff these web monkeys were saying was.

Take 'experience' or 'credentials'. Two words that it's hard to mess with. You either have them or you don't! Normally. But in the New Whacked Order if you said you were doing it yesterday, you were experienced. If you said you were doing it last week you were 'senior'. If you said you were doing it last month you were 'clearly' a seasoned professional. If you said you were doing it last year you were either a total liar or you invented whatever it was you were talking about.Boing!

The first catered 'do'. Not enough food for the first five minutes but enough booze for the next twelve hours.

Person: How much did all this cost us?

Boss Guy: Nothing really. Most of it is corporate hospitality and I just made a deal that covers the whole thing twice over anyway. Pint of lager?

Every voluntarily worked twelve-hour day was a blast. Work.Breakfast. Work. Lunch. Work. Work. Work. Pizza and beer (on the company of course) Work. Company cab home or maybe crash under your desk or on the reception sofa. So much to do so little time.

Rumble rumble rumble: Some company in the States just went public and they're all millionaires. Even the Sys Admin guy. Should we go public? I heard we're opening an office in Amsterdam. Yeah, you wish!

Time for a boat trip paid for by the company. Woohoo!

Boss Guy: A level playing field was a great startingpoint but obviously a company of our size and standing needs Directors who decide what the rules are ... to be taken seriously by the big players... it's still a team effort... need to have the façade of an old school business to succeed.

Drugs of choice are alcohol (of course), hash and the odd line of coke, nothing too demanding.

> Inter Office Memo:
> It is with a great deal of sadness that I have to announce that the super coder who helped us get here has decided to leave us...
> Managing Director Guy (formerly Boss Guy)

Managing Director Guy: We're opening an office in the U.S.They'll love our brand of technical ability over there.

Person: We don't have a brand of technical ability. We're known for our design work. Everyone knows that.

... One of those rather long pause events ...



Managing Director Guy: Like I say our technical ability is going to knock their socks off. Blah blooh bleh ...

Inter Office Memo:
Great News! The Affable Bullshitter is now Sales Director.
Have another drink!
Managing Director Guy.

Now Managing Director Guy was free to work on his next project, creating himself in the image people expected. The wacky and controversial corporate new kid on the block leading the way forward to all those little individual pots of gold. Just a little further, trust me, just a little further.

Sales phone call to client: ... value-add... movers and shakers...quality-driven... customer focused... interface... win - win situation.

Awesome Sales: Don't get me wrong. The money is good but apart from taking big money from big clients and somehow scrabbling to get their websites out the door on time, we don't have an infrastructure or a system to speak of.

Doubts be damned! Standing still is going backwards! This is a race and to win a race you need to keep moving! In short the BS had to get bigger because we were getting bigger. So it did.

Inter Office Memo:
Great News! We've opened a US office! Awesome Sales and Rabid Sales are heading up the team over there and we wish them all the luck in the world. As everyone knows we are recognized as web leaders in the Technical field and...
Managing Director Guy .

But hold on. Isn't that flying in the face of the industry trend? Isn't it big settled US companies setting up offices in the UK? Aren't we behind the US by a year?

Person 1: Yeah, but that's the point! This really is exciting! We're doing it OUR way and it's gonna work!
Person 2: I almost totally believe in the Managing Director Guy but I ain't too sure about this Technical Ability bollocks.
Person 1: Don't be so negative. We're gonna make it!
Quick someone ... say 'What could possibly go wrong?'

Inter Office Memo:
Welcome to the Money Monkey (in a nice new red crushed velvet jacket with shiny gold buttons and matching red fez) who joins us as CFO and Board Director. The Money Monkey comes to us from a background in <insert> buying cheap and selling high at the opportune moment to make Big Bucks! He has no real relevant experience as a manager of people or as a high level Director but the Managing Director Guy owes him a favor so there you go. Although his work ethic is diametrically opposed to that of the Managing Director Guy and the Schmooze Wizard,who want to keep the company fiercely independent, somehow everything is going to work out just fine. <insert> So I hope you'll welcome me in joining him, or something like that.
Have another drink!
Managing Director Guy.

During his first week on the job Money Monkey let slip that he'd be keeping an eye on the company to see the best time to 'go public and clean up'. Confused and innocent stares all round lead him to realize that perhaps it's best to keep his ideas to himself.

Rumble rumble rumble:The Design Demon is going to try and talk to Managing Director Guy about how everybody feels. I'm sure he'll listen.

Inter Office Memo:
NEW FIRST OF MANY OPEN FORUMS TODAY TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE. Everyonebring a question. No sacred cows.
Ask anything.
Managing Director Guy .

So we did. Unfortunately they didn't have any real answers.Touch base. Synergy. Lessons learnt. Game plan. The big picture. Ballpark.Fast track. Empower employees. Total quality. Client focused. Rocket science.

Enter new wave of players including an experienced Project Manager who becomes Studio Director in a heartbeat. Not only is he Just Perfect as a PM, he's also Just Perfect as a mentor and guide for anyonewho's wise enough to listen. While all the new characters loved the money they couldn't help wondering louder and louder what was behind the curtain.

Q: What the hell just happened?
A: Get bigger clients. Get more good good people. Made more money.Opened a second office over the pond! Had a laugh!

Team Mates ...

Smack My Bitch Up! - Prodigy

Q: What's the big idea?
A: Get bigger clients. Get more people. Get more attention. Make more money. Have a bit of fun sometimes.

Rules of Business Chapter XII Sub Section VI Paragraph III: Think of yourself as someone in charge of a unit filled with a myriad of skills waiting to be utilized by you. Surround yourself with self-motivated intelligent people rather than sycophants, but sycophants are fun. Point them in the direction of the challenges you face. Direct rather than monitor. Do notfear the future AT ALL. Trust others as much as you like. You have the touch! You da man!

Rumble rumble rumble:... This place is so crap... there's no accountability... Who's the Project Manager on this?Didn't you get that email? Whose in charge here?

Memo to all:
Just Perfect is now Studio Director. With Schmooze and Perfect in place all departments can now get their own houses in order. The PM's will work on our Project Management Methodology, Designers will work on our Design Methodology and if there's time Sales will work on our Sales stuff. Personal empowerment.Rah! Rah! Rah!
Global Boss Guy (formerly Managing Director Guy).

So everyone rushed off to be masters of their own destiny. How wonderful of the management to show such belief in it's own troops!

Global Boss Guy: So, what's the story?





Just Perfect: Everything here is lead by Sales. This needs to change.
Global Boss Guy: Wow! That is soooo interesting, more paperwork please.

Memo to all:
We are pleased to announce that Money Monkey is now the Managing Director of our US office.
Global Boss Guy.

Typical client meeting: Do the "your dull product into web-touched money magnet" routine. How, oh, how, they plead? Simple, give us the cash, give us your brochures and fuck off. We'll probably contact you in a couple of weeks. By the way this Evian isn't chilled and the salmon tastes off. Where's the car? We've got a 1 p.m. in the City.
Company Expenses items: Novel at airport... haircut... porn video rental... new Armani suit... duty free booze... weekend in Vegas...

Global Boss Guy: We're having another corporate 'do'. Existing and prospective clients. As it's December I thought we'd have an exotic theme. Pour sand on the floor and stick a couple of palm trees in it. Get the Designers to knock up some invites.

Person: The carpet has our name on. I guess that means we've arrived.

Rumble at the 'do': I just met Schmooze and he wasfuming. Seems that naughty Money Monkey has been talking to the other Directors about selling off the company. Luckily Global Boss Guy wasn't buying it. Ooh, nice ice sculpture. No beer for me. I'm on Champagne all night.

Meeting with a business giant so large they could get you a leather-clad Margaret Thatcher and the remaining Beatles doing a medley of show tunes for your birthday. Nice lobby. Is that a real Picasso?

Project Manager: "They want it corporate but funky. Black but white. Night but day."
Digital Artist (formerly Web Designer): "Fine. We'll do the usual. A conservative design, a wacky one and the one we like."

Just Perfect: Everything here is lead by Sales. This needs to change.
Air Miles Guy (formerly Global Boss Guy): Steady on! I wasn't serious you know.

Drug Delivery. Smokey, whiz and the real thing <great name for a band>. Nothing too demanding.
Rumble rumble rumble:If we're the company I keep reading about how come the pay is so shit? There's gotta be some money floating around. Did you see how much we blew on that last 'do'?

Discuss the next company outing. Agree on rural setting with lots of pubs. Verify flights to the US. Book a massage with the company masseur. Try and keep up with the ever-changing faces in reception. Why is there such a high turnover of pretty receptionists?

Rumble rumble rumble :She wouldn't sleep with him so she was fired. No way! WAY!

Just Perfect: What about those changes we keep mentioning?
Air Miles Guy: ... mumble mumble... my money... got to becareful... mumble mumble...
Person: This'us and them' blame-fest that's going on between Sales and Production isn't healthy. Sales blame Production for missed deadlines. Production blames Sales for moving goalposts and impossible to keep timelines. On and on...
Person2: I know there's two sides to it but I still blame Sales.
Person: Yeah, wankers!

Memo:
We're opening an office in the Far East. Details to follow.
Have another drink!
Air Miles Guy.

Person: Everything here is lead by Sales. They keep offering crap we can follow upon. This needs to change.
Just Perfect: Indeed, but it seems that as long as Sales keep making money it's a problem we'll just have to live with.
Person 1: Opening a Far East office? The US one only just turned a real profit last week.
Person 2: Money Monkey reckons the bigger we look the better.
Person 1: Better for who? Better for what?
JustPerfect: What about those changes we keep mentioning?
Air MilesGuy: Let's have a meeting about it sometime.

Q: What happened?
A: Got bigger clients. Employed loads of people: Sixty plus and growing! Made more money. Opened another office.

We're Colleagues...

Ain't no party like an S-Club party! - S Club 7

Q: What's the big idea?
A: Get bigger clients. Make more money. Keep everyone believing.

Rules of Business Chapter XII Sub Section VI Paragraph III: Think of yourself with others working for you. Surround yourself with sycophants. Push them in the direction of all the challenges that surround you. Direct them with a steel glove. Be wary of the future. Trust your own instincts.

Rumble rumble rumble:The way I heard it Schmooze has been trying to get Production friendly changes made but with three members of a four member Board from Sales how easy is that going to be?

Drugs of choice: Sorted for E's and Whizz.

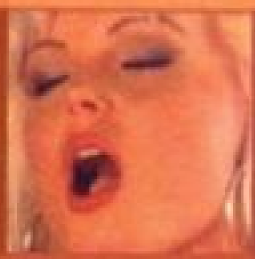
Just Perfect: What about those changes we keep mentioning?
CEO Guy (formerly Air Miles Guy): Do you know to whom you are speaking young man?

Memo:
By now you should have received your share certificates...
CEO Guy.

Person 1: Run that by me again.
Person 2: You have to pay for the shares, either now or in the future,and you don't get anything unless you stay for another four years and they're only worth something IF we go public.
Person 1: Run that by me again.

Memo:
Latest transcript of an interview with CEO Guy on the web site. Everybody go read it and love it! Be cheerful!
Company Press Officer.







Woke up in Heathrow Terminal 3 or 4 with new annoying corporate theme tune buzzing in my head.

Rumble rumble rumble: The way I heard it with the share allocation deal there was no reasoning behind who got the most shares. It was simply who CEO Guy liked at the time.

The latest corporate 'do' was a laugh.

Hardly dressed former employee who was led to believe it was a 'wear as little as you dare' futuristic party and so came 'dressed' in some thin rubber tubes and body glitter: It's so great to see all of you again!
Person: It's so great to see all of you too!

Press. Guest Speakers. Absinthe drinkers setting each other on fire.Vomit everywhere. Look, there's happily married CEO Guy telling any woman who'll listen how it's lonely at the top.

Just Perfect: What about those changes we mentioned?
Emperor Guy (formerly CEO Guy): At the tone... snort... leave a message...

Rumble rumble rumble: Schmooze is going to try and talk to the Emperor Guy about how everybody feels. . The problem is that Emperor Guy is getting quite carried away by all the attention he's getting now that we're such a big shit global player. Plus the Money Monkey has his ear. I'm not sure he'll listen.

Memo:
OPEN FORUM TODAY TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE... snort...
bring your own toga. Ask anything.
Emperor Guy.

So we did. Unfortunately they didn't have any real answers.Results-driven. Mindset. Think outside the box. Best practice. Process Improvement. Skill set. Our brand of work. Go that extra mile. Knock-on effect. Put this one to bed.

Newbie: I saw that interview you gave. Seems your prediction about the US was right.
Emperor Guy: I always knew it would be our designs that won us the deals... snort... After all we started out as web designers. Wine! I demand more wine!

Woke up in the USA. Everything is so big here. The food, the people eating the food, the bullshit the people eating the food are saying. Is this a Holiday Inn or a Best Western? (Is there a Worse Western?)

Person1: Have you seen the new Corporate Video?
Person 2: No, what's it like?
Person 1: Like an audiovisual version of the theme tune.
Person 2: That bad? Really?
Person 1: Really.
Just Perfect: What about those changes we mentioned?
Emperor Guy (doing Jon Hurt as Caligula): Do you know what happened to me last night, Uncle? I went to sleep a mortal and woke up a God!

Woke up in the big meeting room in the U.K. News from them to us. (The following is available as a wav, mp3 or win media file):

Emperor Guy: Can you hear me at the back? Firstly, everything is fine. The economy of mortals appears troubled but the company is in great shape. The barbarian hordes are massing to the North but we see this as a good opportunity to work on ourselves for a while. Get our internal house in order. I've been waiting for some movement on our methodology and structure but you folks don't seem to be too willing to change. Time to sort out some, as I say, internal issues. Centurion, more wine!
Went to sleep in the bottom of my pint glass.

Rumble rumble rumble: Why did we open a Far East office and have all these nice new corporate colored carpets put in if business is getting so slow?

Woke up in the Far East. Man, is it ever hot?! What am I doing here?Oh yeah, four days in the sun for a one hour meeting in support of the Emperor. "But why the internet?" the suits ask. Didn't we stop answering that two years ago?

Person: We just landed one of the biggest companies on earth.They're so big I can't tell you who it is.

Went to sleep in the U.S. Couldn't be bothered to go on the company skiing trip. Maybe next time.

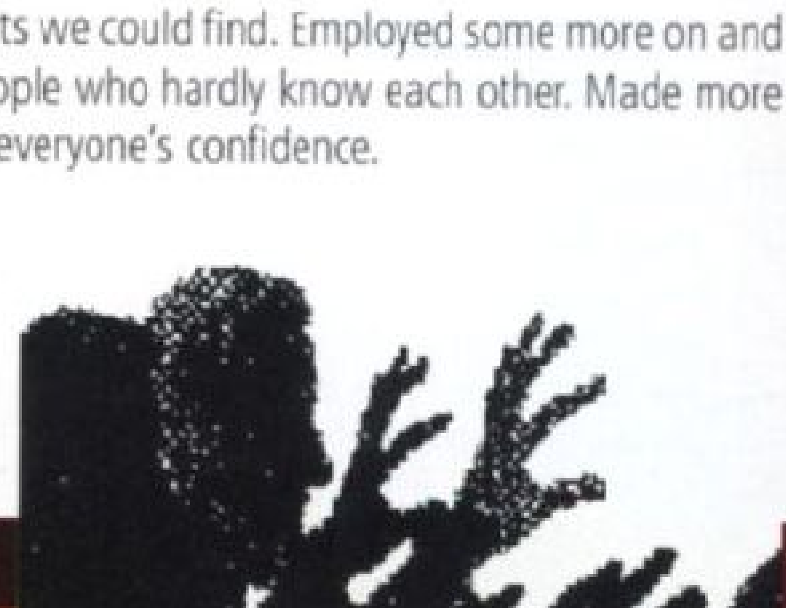
Rumble rumble rumble: You won't believe this. Our gloriousleader's PA is now HR Director! No, really. She's been learning the 'HR stuff' at night school. Stop laughing.I'm serious.

Memo:
Find attached Money Monkey's magic chart. (oooh aaah)
How ever you look at it Production is to blame. Despite our careful management it seems that by the end of next month we may have to let some people go.Don't worry. I'll be fine.
God Amongst Men Guy (formerly Emperor Guy)

Money Monkey: We should have sold out two years ago.
Just Perfect: You wanted to see me?
God Amongst Men Guy: What about those... snort... changes we mentioned?
Just Perfect: Excuse me?
God Amongst Men Guy: You folks had a chance at leading and it went nowhere ... sniff. It's time for a back to basics approach to management. Old school style. One clear voice leading the way.
Just Perfect: Let me guess whose voice that will be...

Q: What happened?

A: Got the biggest clients we could find. Employed some more on and off: Over a hundred people who hardly know each other. Made more money.Leadership lost everyone's confidence.





STRANGERS ...

We must learn. Learn to turn. - Travis

Q: What's the big idea?
A: Make money.

Rules of Business Chapter XII Sub Section VI Paragraph III: Think of yourself.Ignore the future. Trust no-one.

Memo:
Great News! Investment! We've decided to take a small lump of cash from Behemoth Industries. They want us to remain independent and simply want to help a small com pany that they admire to do well. Ah, bless!Don't be worried about the future. The last thing that will happen is that they get a majority stake in the company and turn it into their web department.You have my word on that.
God Amongst Men Guy.

Drugs of choice: Some like Pepsi, others prefer...

Rumble rumble rumble: The Schmooze Wizard is going to try and-transmit a message to God Amongst Men Guy's planet.

Memo:
OPEN FORUM. Everyone bring a picture of me. Ask anything.
God Amongst Men Guy.

So we did. Unfortunately they didn't have any real answers. The bottom line. Core business. Hardball.Proactive, not reactive. Skill set. Change management. Move the goal posts.Ticks in boxes. Out of the loop.

Person 1: Who was that guy standing at the back?
Person 2: Some consultant brought in to do the financial stuff. He's a friend of the CFO.
Person 1: I thought the CFO did all that financial stuff.
<General laughter>

Memo:
Redundancies! REDUNDANCIES!!
The Three Stooges. (God Amongst Men Guy, Affable Bullshitter and MoneyMonkey)

What a refreshing state of affairs it was for everyone when they found out that it would not be some inverted meritocracy based on performance that decided who would stay or leave. It was simply who God Amongst Men Guy liked at the time.

God Amongst Men Guy: It's weird... sniff... the feelings people are expressing to me. They're angry at me... snort ... like I'm responsible for the state the company is in. Like some how it's my fault?!

Memo:
Next Tuesday is 'Wear a suit day'! Even girls! Are we wacky or what? Be cheerful!
Company Press Officer.

Rumble rumble rumble: The accounting firm that audits us told us we get our shit in order or we lose their services so we've bought-some dinosaur software application to track productivity. It only cost us two hundred and fifty thousand. Bargain!

Memo:
Sad news, I guess. Schmooze Wizard is leaving. He and the Board have agreed to a slow departure, over six months.
Astronaut Guy (formerly God Amongst Men Guy)

One month later Schmooze jumped, or was he pushed? More people left,some simply because the Schmooze Wizard had gone, others because it wasn't fun anymore. Clearly Schmooze had not been able to make Astronaut Guy see any other perspective on things. Everything was still Production's fault and that was that. If Production was wrong and the Schmooze Wizard was in charge of Production then good bye and good riddance seemed to be the thought.With the Schmooze Wizard gone the voice of Production was gone. Now the Sales-born Directors could call all the shots.

Design Demon: With all these self-congratulating award dinners and interviews you're giving aren't you're in danger of becoming the very person you used to laugh at?
Astronaut Guy: I've matured a lot since the early days.
Design Demon: We're from Earth. We've come to take you home.

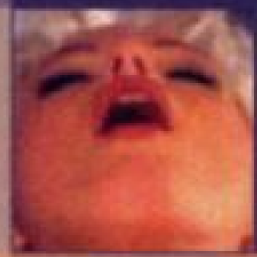
Memo:
Our second US office is open for business! Be cheerful!
Company Press Officer.

Person1: Tell me that again.
Person 2: Money Monkey came over and asked me if I was doing anything next week. I said no so he told me I was going out to the new office. I flew out there and spent a week sitting in an empty roomwaiting for the phone to ring.
Person 1: So why were you there?
Person 2: Beats me but I'm sure of one thing. I was there to make it look like we've got two working offices.

Memo:
Sad News, I guess. The Just Perfect Studio Director has decided to leave us. Oh well, there you go. Until then he'll be passing his knowedge on to the always open to suggestions AffableBullshitter, current MD of Sales, who replaces him as head of Production.We wish them both well.
Astronaut Guy.
PS.More Redundancies maybe. See how I feel.

Rumble rumble rumble: Just Perfect didn't have a job to go to but just couldn't stay anymore giving tacit support to the three stooges...





Bollock's

Just Perfect: I've been here for a month trying to get your time so we can talk before I leave. Are you avoiding me?
Affable Bullshitter: You still here?

Astronaut Guy: Hello, Design Demon? Is this a secure line?I've had a brilliant...sniff... idea. You know what I might do? I might ask the staff to...snort... work for us for free with the assurance that when we make money they can get paid. What...sniff... do you think? Do you think people will go for that? Hello? You there?

Memo to Production:
This is Year Zero. Everything you know is wrong.
Affable Bullshitter.
PS. ICQ is banned. Get on with your work!

Person 1: Tell me that again.
Person 2: Happily married Astronaut Guy just went to the wedding celebration of one of the company favorite PM's. As he was in orbit most of the night he didn't realize that the woman he was trying to pick up with his "recently divorced and it's tough at the top" routine was the bride herself!

Astronaut Guy (clutching bag of coins): Who said that? Who's there? What's the password?

Memo:
Great News! The US Office has a new US Project Director.
Astronaut Guy.
PS. Next 'company do' at the Zoo. Yippee!

One week later...

New US Project Director: Boy, did I mess up taking a gig with this bunch of clowns? Absolutely!

Memo:
To set the record straight let me clarify that the company shows no discrimination. When it comes to girlies, genuinely hard workers, lesser races or girlies who are going to be mummies... we promise we'll let anyone go.
Astronaut Guy.
PS. More investment and yet more redundancies, funny eh?

Memo:
Design Demon and Not Human (whoever they were) have left. They weren't one of us.
Astronaut Guy.
PS. You can run but you can't hide. Redundancies!

AstronautGuy: It's awful to have to let more people go but at least...sniff... it frees up some more company shares to hand out. Hello? Anyone there?

Memo:
Great News. Behemoth Industries now has majority shares in the company. Technically speaking we're now their web department but don't worry, I'll be fine. Really, I'll be just fine. Have another drink!
Flaky Rich Guy (formerly Astronaut Guy).
PS. Drink on me tonight at the pub to celebrate. One bottle of sparkling wine and a box of straws please barman!

Q: What happened?

A: Depends who you ask but I see one Flaky Rich Guy and a lot ofpeople with sore buttholes.

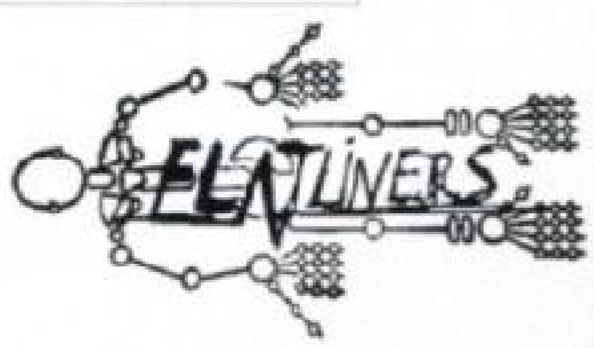
So just as quickly as the party boat had appeared it disappeared over the horizon riding waves of bad feelings, litigation and worthless stocks.No doubt a new and improved Next Big Thing will be around again in a few years.

Sorry this tale didn't end in a bang like some Hollywood blockbuster but generally the affairs of humans do seem to end as disappointingly weak farts way more often than big cinemascope kabooms,don't they? Like an uninvited rave festival in one's garden, after all the noise has died down all one was left with was a bad smell, a hangover and a lot of cleaning up to do.

Memo:
The dinosaur software application to track productivity is about to launch. Oh no, hold on, slight delay.
Company Press Officer.

But it isn't all doomy gloomy. Dreams did come true. Take Flaky Rich Guy for example. He made some big cash, got a lot of air miles, and finally was in orbit by the end of it all, although it wasn't rocket fuel that enabled his ascent. And all the folks with sore buttholes? Well, they learned a lot about life and a little about business along the way, or was it a little about life and a lot about business? Or was it a little about life and even less about business? Regardless, lessons were learnt, drinks were drunk, decisions were made and life rolls on. Catch you on the next wave!

Transmission from Space:
I've got this great idea! Hello? Hello? Anyone there?
Flaky Rich Guy



DVD 2 EXTRAS

In Board of Directors Commentary
Tright2002 interviews with Cast
Alternative Perspectives Ending
1000 Deleted Site Designs
Corporate Video and Theme
Corporate Carpet Sweepstakes
Mission Statements (All 12 of them)
Unrated Photo Gallery
Litigation Diary
Subtitles for Americans

A CALL FOR MORE SCIENTIFIC TRUTH IN PRODUCT WARNING LABELS

Susan Hewitt and Edward Subitzky, New York

As scientists and concerned citizens, we applaud the recent trend towards legislation that requires the prominent placement of warnings on products that present hazards to the general public. Yet we must also offer the cautionary thought that such warnings, however well-intentioned, merely scratch the surface of what is really necessary in this important area. This is especially true in light of the findings of 20th century physics.

We are therefore proposing that, as responsible scientists, we push for new laws that will mandate the conspicuous placement of suitably informative warnings on the packaging of every product in every category offered for sale in the United States of America. Our suggested list of required warnings appears below.

WARNING: This product warps space and time in its vicinity.

WARNING: This product attracts every Other piece of matter in the Universe, Including the products of other manufacturers, with a force proportional to the product of the masses and inversely proportional to the distance between them.

CAUTION: The mass of this product contains the energy equivalent of 85 Million tons of TNT per net ounce of weight.

HANDLE WITH EXTREME CARE: This product contains minute electrically charged particles moving at velocities in excess of 500,000,000 miles per hour.

CONSUMER NOTICE: Because of the "Uncertainty Principle," It is impossible for the consumer to find out at the same time both precisely where this product is and how fast it is moving.

ADVISORY: There is an extremely Ssmall but nonzero chance that, through a process known as "Tunneling," This product may spontaneously disappear from Its present location and reappear at any random place in the Universe, including your neighbour's domicile. The manufacturer will not be responsible for any damages or inconvenience that may result.

READ THIS BEFORE OPENING PACKAGE: According to certain suggested versions of a grand unified theory, the primary particles constituting this product may decay to nothingness within the next 400,000,000 years.

THIS IS A 100% MATTER PRODUCT: In the unlikely event that this merchandise should contact antimatter in any form, a catastrophic explosion will result.

PUBLIC NOTICE AS REQUIRED BY LAW: Any use of this product, in any manner whatsoever, will increase the amount of disorder in the Universe. Although no liability is implied herein, the consumer Is warned that this process will ultimately lead to the heat death of the universe.

NOTE: The most fundamental particles in this product are held together by a "Gluing" force about which little is currently known and whose adhesive power can therefore not be permanently guaranteed.

ATTENTION: Despite any other listing of product contents found hereon, the consumer is advised that, in actuality, this product consists of 99.9999999999% empty space.

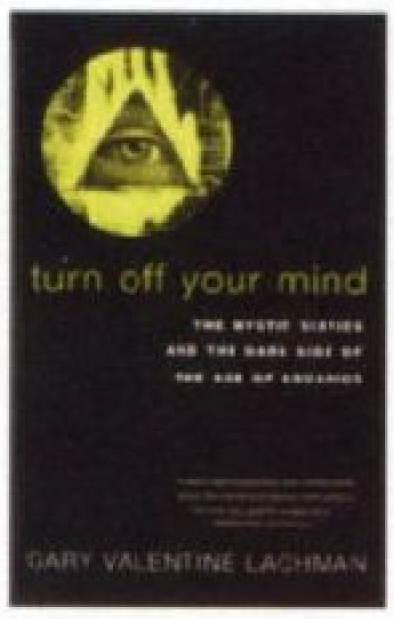
NEW GRAND UNIFIED THEORY DISCLAIMER: The manufacturer may technically be entitled to claim that this product is ten-dimensional. However, the consumer is reminded that this confers no legal rights above and beyond Those applicable to three-dimensional objects, since the seven new dimensions are "Rolled Up" into such a small "Area" that they cannot be detected.

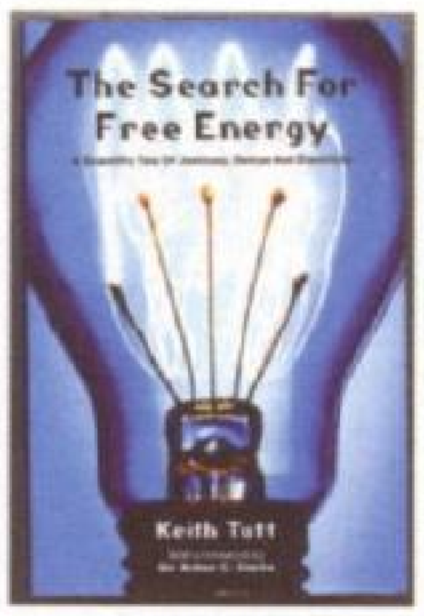
PLEASE NOTE: Some quantum physics theories suggest that when the consumer is not directly observing this product, It may cease to exist or will exist only in a vague and undetermined state.

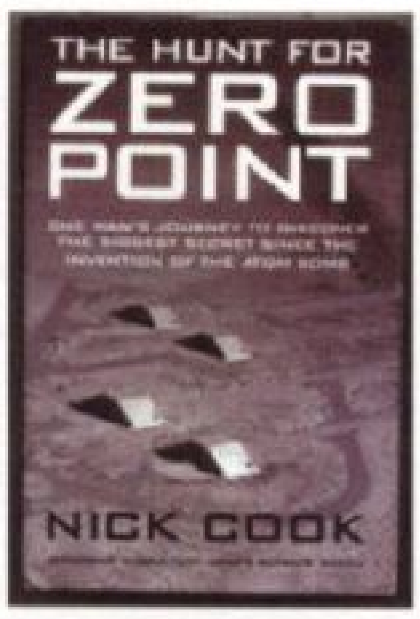
COMPONENT EQUIVALENCY NOTICE: The subatomic particles (Electrons, Protons, etc.) comprising this product are exactly the same in every measurable respect as those used in the products of other manufacturers, and no claim to the contrary may legitimately be expressed or implied.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO PURCHASERS: The entire physical Universe, including this product, may one day collapse back into an infinitesimally small space. Should another universe subsequently re-emerge, the existence of this product in that Universe cannot be guaranteed.

archive







Gary Valentine Lachman, Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius,

Sidgwick & Jackson, £12

The sixties was never just about love that was a lie put about by long haired clowns (probably ugly long hairs, even) who waxed nostalgic about their past the sixties was about Nam, conscription, psychedelic insanity, and garbled philosophies. If the sixties didn't start till spring '65, and ended in May '68 there was a lot of dead time in that decade, in which (supposed) counterculture (supposed) malevolence was able to grow. Of course, it couldn't be any other way. This volume explores what, to many, would be the darker side of the decade, and the roots it sent rippling through the subsequent years. Manson. The Process. It is all here, all good solid interesting entertainment of the nasty voyeuristic kind. This is the kind of book it is hard to dislike, and it makes obsessive reading, but there's a lot of things from the sick-sixties covered here that have already been more-than-covered elsewhere (not least by ex-beat poet Ed Sander's in his tome to Charles Manson and acid-paranoia The Family). The truth (or whatever passes for truth) is that it would have been interesting to see some of the less-familiar 'scary' hippies and their ilk covered here, rather than the predictable role call.

Jack Sargeant

The Search for Free Energy

Kieth Tutt £18.99

At a time when rolling brown outs are plaguing the west coast of the US, it's surprising this book hasn't received more attention or become a rallying point for pissed off Californian engineers. Kieth Tutt does a thorough job of reporting on a range of free energy systems being developed in back sheds around the world. If they ever get past the 'almost working' stage, some of these inventions could prove to be something big.

Tragically, some of these un-realised possibilities date back over a century, with Nikola Tesla's development of a broadcast power system. Even though we owe modern AC current to him, he only got as far as a half finished tower at Wardenclyffe, Long Island before the investor realised the implications of what he was up too and pulled the plug.

Today free energy systems remain perpetually in the urban legend domain, with brief mentions in obscure magazines or fleeting news items which are never broadcast again. With documentation and interviews aplenty author gets under the skin of the inventors who are trying to break the international stranglehold of the oil companies to make the planet a cleaner place.

Fascinating reading, which demonstrates that some people are actually trying to do something practical while the bureaucrats and environmental protesters sit around with their collective thumbs up their asses rehashing old arguments.

The Hunt For Zero Point

Nick Cook £17.99

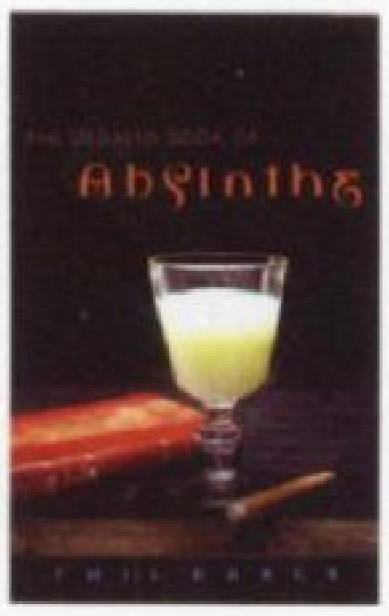
What makes more sense: flying saucers are extraterrestrial visitors or that they are man made stealth aircraft using advanced propulsion systems that remain classified to this day? As aerospace consultant on industry bible Jane's Defence Weekly, Cook is uniquely positioned to look into this quagmire of rumours and find out what really is going on.

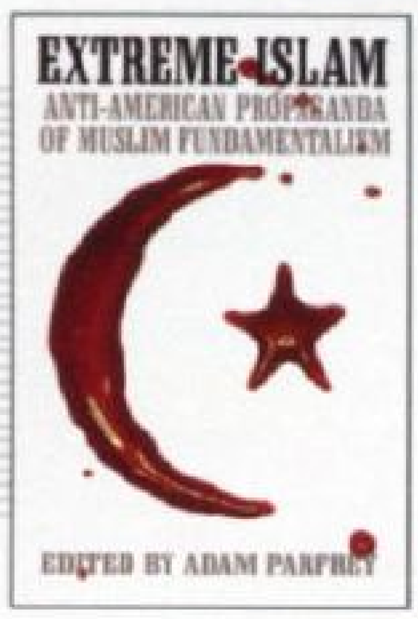
The story starts with the appearance on his desk of a clipping from a '50s American science magazine. The article states that 'The G-Engines Are Coming', and details various leading American aviation companies - including Lear and Martin Aircraft – that were on the verge of a massive gravity control breakthrough. This was to create a whole new classification of aircraft that could travel up to 170,000 miles per hour and would open up the possibility of easy access to space.

After tracking down one of the people mentioned in the article Cook was faced with a firm rebuttal and the advice to drop and forget the matter entirely. 50 or so years later, people are still very scared.

The mystery deepens with the arrival of a "Deep Throat" character who feeds Cook tidbits of information and provides an interesting paper trail that leads him to secret World War II Nazi research and on to a little known Nazi complex in Poland.

The Hunt For Zero Point is a quick and compulsive read that brings a fresh perspective and credible journalistic insights to a phenomenon that continues to puzzle today.





THE DEDALUS BOOK OF ABSINTHE

Phil Baker

No drink, as Phil Baker notes early on, has ever had such a bad reputation as absinthe. Toxic, gut-rotting, hallucinatory, it was the emerald poison of decadent poets and working-class alcoholics in the nineteenth-century Last Chance Saloon, "where Bohemia meets Skid Row".

And while it illuminated the underbellies of 1890s Paris and London with its sickly green glow, the mother of all moral panics was building to prohibit it. In the words of one of many deathless campaign slogans assembled here, "If absinthe isn't banned, our country will rapidly become an immense padded cell where half the French will be occupied putting straightjackets on the other half".

It was finally prohibited during the First World War after years of such dire warnings - but now it's back, filling the shelves of Soho bars and the ad pages of glossy magazines. So what's going on?

Baker reckons that the best way to get a handle on absinthe's lurid reputation is not through the drink but the drinkers, and he embarks on a meandering and very engaging trawl through the absinthe culture of fin-de-siècle Europe.

We meet the legendary absintheurs - Baudelaire, Dowson, Verlaine, Strindberg, Alfred Jarry and Aleister Crowley - and get a vivid sense of how they distilled their (often considerable) habits into a poetry of sublime vice and perfumed decay. We meet the moral crusaders, and those like Marie Corelli who, in her absinthe novel Wormwood, used the green fairy as a flesh-creeping symbol for the modern evils of sensuality, indulgence and madness - "absinthe as bottled doom".

We hear, too, the ironic chatter of the (mostly English) satirists like Max Beerbohm and Evelyn Waugh who found absinthe an irresistable motif for lampooning the pretensions of gilded doomed youth.

This is all great stuff, and sets us up for the extended coda of the modern absinthe revival - both in its American gothic variant of New Orleans and Anne Rice vampires and its British co-option into the hell-bent twenty-first century drink-drug cocktail culture. Turning finally from the drinkers to the drink, we get the bottom line on whether the wormwood in absinthe makes it a more trippy intoxication that other spirits, or more toxic (or, as it turns out, both). Rounded out with an appendix of classic absinthe texts, another of road-tests of the currently available brands, and plenty of notes and sources, this is a very appealing package - tastier, definitely cheaper and probably more illuminating than the drink itself.

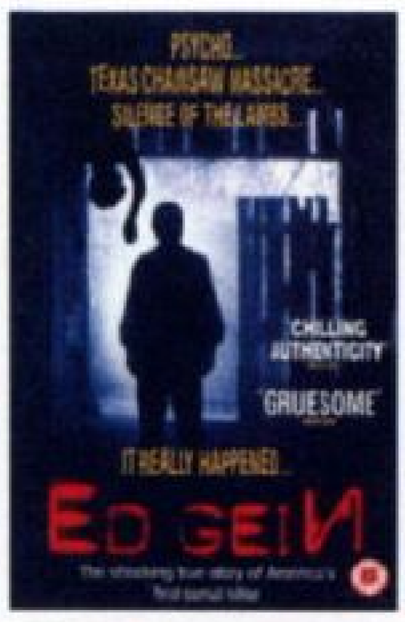
Adam Parfrey, ed, Extreme Islam: Anti-American Propaganda of Muslim Fundamentalism, Feral House, $16.

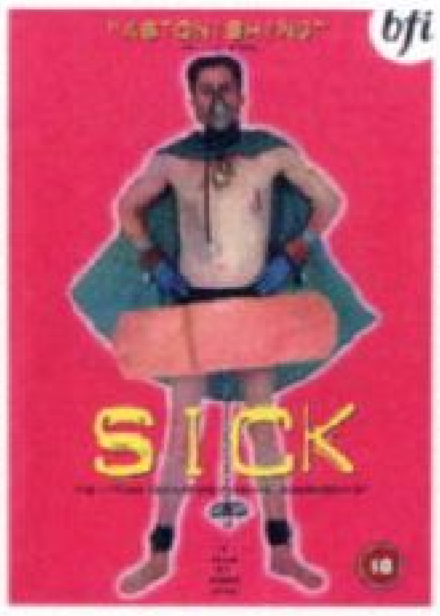
Letting the Islamic fundamentalists speak for themselves via essays, poems, tracts, and images (several in colour), this book is a truly wild collection of documents collated by Parfrey. Extreme Islam shows exactly what 'intellectual' ammunition re-enforces the mindset of these zealots. The information is dense, and gives valuable insight into the philosophy espoused by people who would genuinely like to see everything most people in the West take for granted (relative freedom, the potential for human rights) annihilated in favour of pure Islamic Law based on very literal interpretations of the Qur'an.

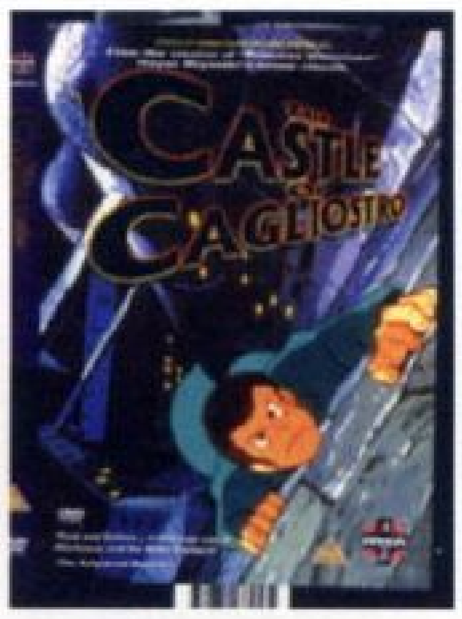
But Parfrey doesn't allow this collection to deteriorate into simple Islamaphobia, and also included are texts by fundamentalist Zionists and crazy-Christians. In addition to other supplemental information regarding the treatment of women under Muslim fundamentalism, and a noteworthy chapter detailing Israeli incursions into Palestinian territory in August 2001.

Fundamentalists from Islam, Judaism, and Christianity have (vague) religious claims on the (so called) Holy Land, and from reading this it becomes clear that some followers from all of these religions are willing to kill in order to start a forthcoming apocalypse. A fascinating and necessary book.

Jack Sargeant







The Castle of Cagliostro

Manga Video 109 min

Old Skool types may have a faint glimmer of recognition for this title and they'd be right if they thought they had seen it somewhere before - in an arcade. This was used as source material for a laserdisc game which let you interact with the narrative. As with most such games, this was generally limited to a jump or a duck button, but it still had real moving video, a definite leap from the crude pixels of yester year.

Now released on DVD from Manga Video this classic madcap action comedy can be watched without the need of a collection of coins at the ready. Lupin III is a master thief and grandson of a famous thief from 18th Century French novels. The story starts with Lupin and his ex-yakuza partner Jigen knocking over a government run casino, only to dump the score upon discovering that the money is counterfeit "Goat-bills." In flash of inspiration, Lupin III decides to revisit his past and track the funny-money to its source, somewhere in the mysterious and teeny European nation of Cagliostro.

What ensues is a fast and riotous romp featuring crazy car chases, a beautiful princess held captive against her will, an evil Count with a mysterious agenda, and a castle loaded with hi-tech goodies and anti-thief devices, prompting some insane animated stunts.

One of a series of Lupin III films along with popular TV series in Japan, The Castle of Cagliostro is a great addition to any anime collection and worth catching if UK broadcasters ever get around to showing it on TV.

Purists will admire this DVD for the technical aspects of the encoding and the choice of watching it with voiceovers or Japanese with English subtitles.

Sick

The Life and death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist bfi 86 min

The first twenty or so minutes of Sick had me wondering why I was watching it and if I should cheat by fast forwarding through to the end, even though I knew how it finished - he dies. It took me that long to decide whether I liked Bob Flannagan or not, or whether the masochist aspects, along with the cycstic fibrosis which eventually killed him, was too in yer face to sit through. It's all down to editing of course and that's the way the director Kirby Dick put it together. I'd imagine the Living Channel would have done it differently.

Weeding through the intense subject matter it doesn't take a genius to recognise that Bob Flannagan was a warm, honest and nice individual with a wicked sense of humour. The early stand-up footage scattered around the documentary was brilliant and spot on, but tragically there wasn't enough of it as that's where Bob's light shone the brightest.

Masochism, like chess, is an intensely personal experience and not one the film portrays terribly well, beyond the initial shock of seeing some one's dick being nailed to a plank.

Making sense of his art out of masochist experience and how it interleaved with the cycstic fibrosis he was battling is best left to art critics.

Sick is a compelling, humorous and sad biography of a man who gave the finger to a disease that normally kills its victim as teenagers by living into his forties.

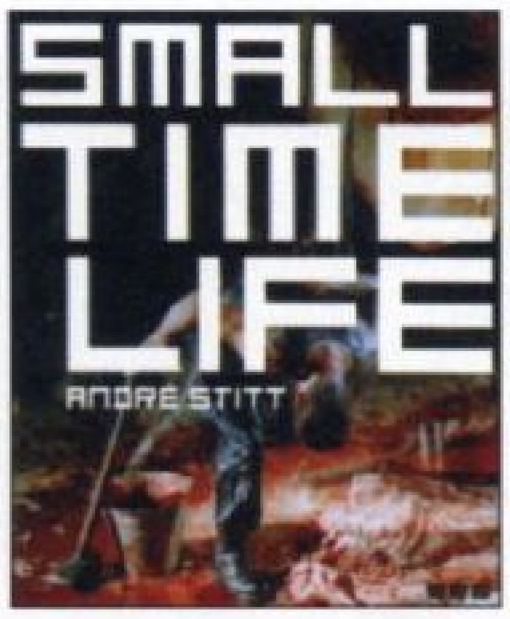
Ed Gein

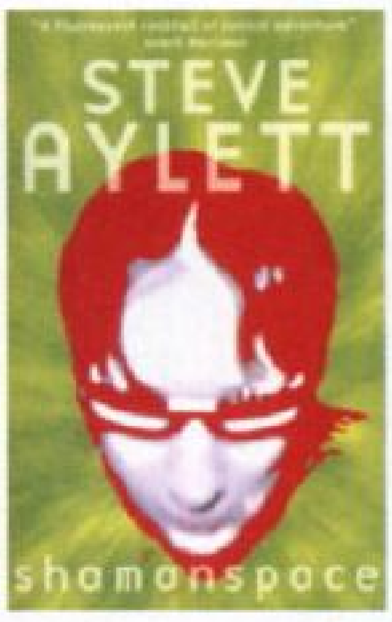
Director:Chuck Parello

Bleak bio-pic of middle-aged Wisconsin murderer Ed Gein, famous for grave robbing and killing maternal looking women. Gein's notoriety arose from his pragmatic use of the corpses he acquired; cannibalism was the least of his sins as he turned skin into clothes (on his arrest he possessed a belt made of human nipples and masks made from human faces) and bones into household ornaments. His crimes so terrified the world that his story became the basis for Bloch's horror story and Hitchcock's subsequent movie - Psycho and Hooper's The Texas Chain Saw Massacre. This low-budget movie purports to tell Gein's real story, and certainly it lacks the overt horror elements of films influenced by the crimes, there are no set pieces here, no shower scene or chainsaw screaming. Instead, this movie contextualises Gein within a brutally dysfunctional Christian childhood and a vicious Oedipal Complex. If you want splatter for spatter's sake look elsewhere, but if claustrophobia and darkness are your thing then this is worth spending an evening watching.

Jack Sargeant







Fruits

by Shoichi Aoki, Phaidon, £19.85/$29.95, ISBN 0714840831

Ninety-three percent of communication is non-verbal, non text-related. You will probably forget these words in the next thirty minutes, unless an image will form within your mind picturing what I'm going to talk about. Or unless you can see my furry tiger-print outfit and yellow alien horns I'm wearing while writing this.

Yet here I am, trying to describe a book that defies description, a purely visual feast conjuring up enough inspiration and ideas to fill another book with text. And given the choice, you would still pick up *Fruits*. In fact since 1994 millions of Japanese kids have been picking up and treating the magazine version of it as a bible, founded by photographer Shoichi Aoki • to document fashion trends of Tokyo's Harajuku district.

Layered kimonos over 80's tracksuits, held together by a huge sash. Superimposed petticoats in clashing prints. Yellow tartan socks in geta sandals under pink legwarmers, tied up with red ribbons under pink cotton pantaloons. And that's just the legwear. More: an entire family colour-co-ordinated with fluorescent cyber-plastic trousers, baby-blue fur and His'n'Hers pink and blue hair (the same family pops up again pages later wearing a head-to-toe '70s-cum-hand-made quilt look). A guy in swimming goggles and a crocheted granny shawl, over rainbow striped trousers and sky-high platform shoes.

The text accompanying the pictures is limited to the names of the wearers, the sources of their look and its point, a formula recently appropriated by street-savvy style magazines like I-D. We learn of distinct trends like Wa-mono (traditional Japanese clothes mixed with Western items) and Decora (over-accessorizing with the biggest possible quantity of stuff that jingles and clashes when walking), and suddenly the past three seasons of John Galliano for Dior make sense. But as Aoki himself points out, "It doesn't matter what kind of clothes individual designers make. What is important are one's thoughts and ability to express them, one's life and its relationship to the environment. When such elements are combined they create a sculpture. This sculpture I call street fashion." Get the image? Get this book!

Emilia Telese Feb 2002

Small Time Life

Andre Stitt, Black Dog Publishing.

'Performance' artist Andre Stitt (although the label 'performance art' does not do justice to Stitt's work, which clearly exists in a zone beyond the clichés of simple genre) is known for his engagement ('Akshuns') with the various notions and concepts located in the nexus of violence / identity / body. In his work he identifies with the trickster spirits, the other, the marginalized, and the dispossessed. Little surprise given that the artist grew up in the Belfast of the seventies. This fully illustrated book collects together documentation from numerous akshuns spanning Stitt's career. The text supplementing the vivid images is edited from a conversation between Stitt and Roddy Hunter. As a document to one of the most important artists working today it is incredible, but this goes further and offers those unfamiliar with this kind of work a chance to fully immerse themselves within the milieu of genuinely innovative work and is a good place for those wanting to research the state-of-the-art to begin. Highly recommended.

Jack Sargeant

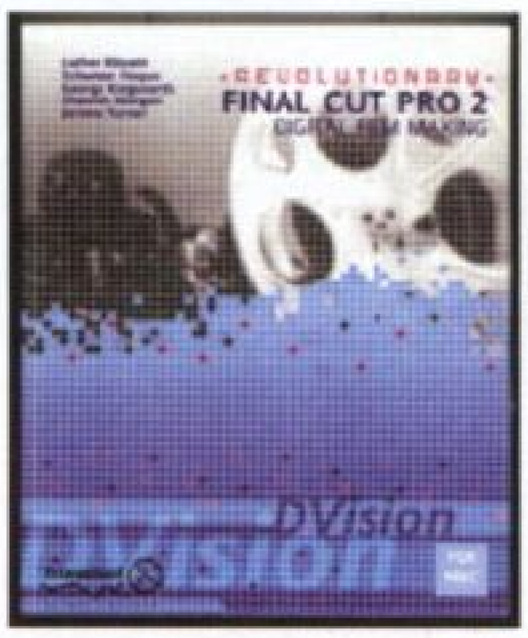
Shamenspace

Steve Aylett
£6.99

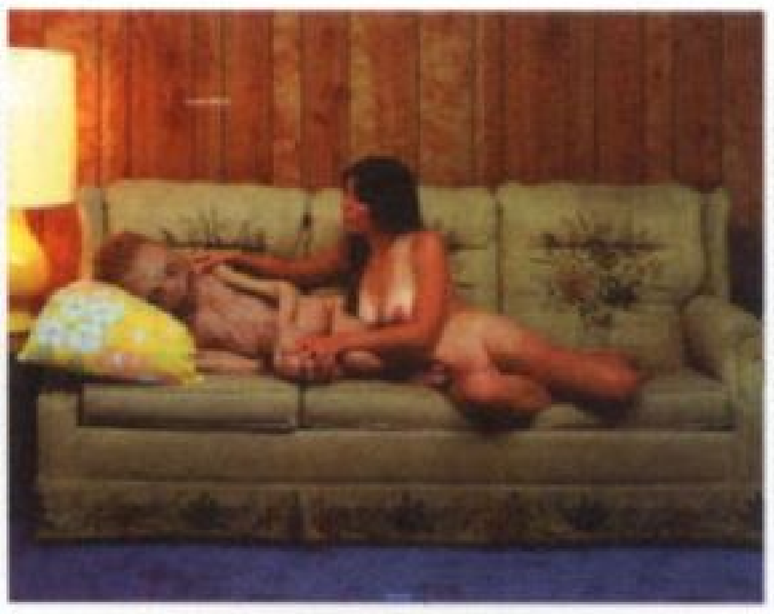
If God existed, would you seek him out and kill him? Steve Aylett's Shamenspace is a densely distilled tale of rival occult assassins out to snuff the creator, with lead character Alix as the odds on favourite to get the job done.

The two groups both take different sides now that it's been established that God does exist - one to snuff him out and liberate our sacks of flesh while the other believes to do so would destroy the very foundations of reality. But can Alix get close enough to do it? While somewhat short in overall length, Shamenspace is poetry on speed with the descriptive density of cyberpunk fiction mixed with occult out-of-your-head weirdness.

As the dream of virtual reality lies in tatters and the rest of rest of cyberpunk's dystopian world already plays itself out in real-time, could we be seeing the beginnings of a new genre?







Revolutionary Final Cut Pro 2

Digital Film Making
Luther Blissett et al Friends Of, $49.99

A clear, concise guide to digital guerrilla film making in Fincal Cut Pro 2. Covers everything from planning and executing a shoot to post production FX, sound and finally distribution. Manages to cover everything in reasonable detail with room for handy tips like "don't tell your cast and crew what your budget is"! Roger Corman and Robert Rodriguez eat your hearts out! Comes with CD of examples for use in tutorials. Good stuff, if pricey and now needing an update to FCP3.

Destroy All Monsters

Ken Hollings
Marion Boyars £8.99

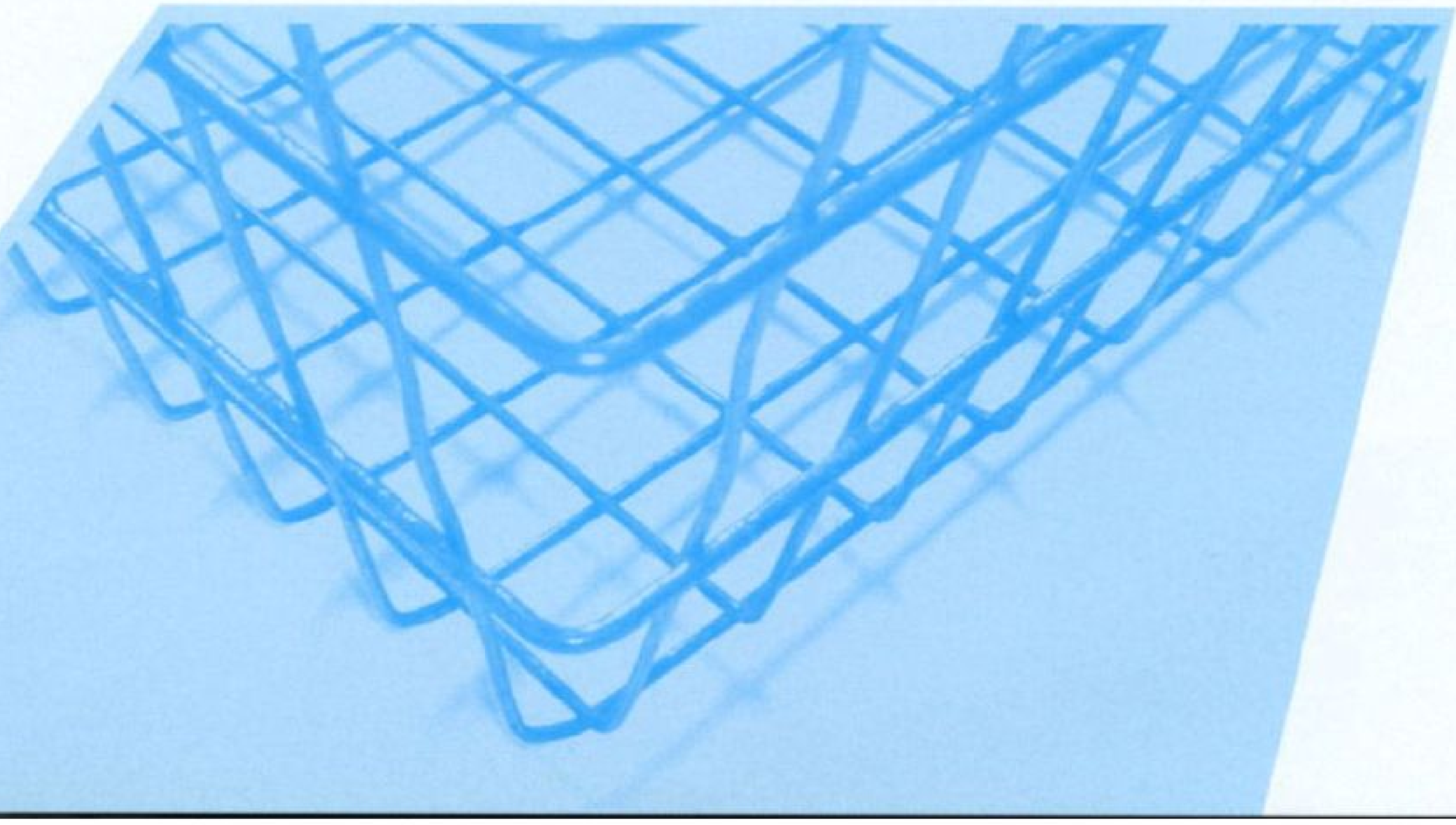
Sometime in the almost now, Operation Desert Storm has been raging for almost two years, a resurrected Elvis is making a political comeback (of sorts) and gigantic Terror Monsters are destroying Japan. Might it be necessary to destroy the Earth in order to save it? Are parasitic aliens our only hope for world peace? And what about Puppy, the telepathic lab dog? Ultraviolent psychedelic mechamania, this is a fictional history of the future as it really is. America is once again preparing us for war with Saddam Hussein. If Boy George knows what's good for him, he'll save a very comfy chair in the War Room for Ken Hollings. He may be our only hope.

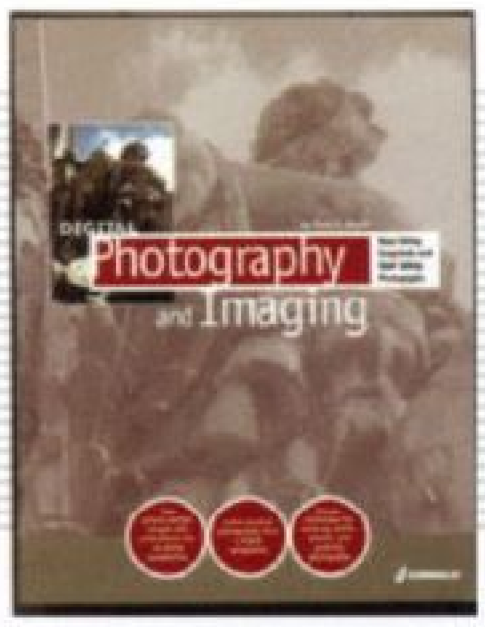
Charlie White, Photographs,

Goliath, $39.95

Technically perfect but largely soulless pictures depicting a kind of sexed-up Hollywood sci-fi blockbuster. Naked models painted like Star Trek extras. Monsters attacking co-eds. Aliens hanging out with yuppies. It is all very sci-fi, but the fact is that it is also very cold. There is little doubt that there is much too be had from sci-fi metaphors, but the true terrors of our world lie under the veil of suburban normality viz Cronenberg, Lynch et al and not in outtakes from some teenager's cheesy sci-fi comic book collection.

Jack Sargeant







WIN STUFF!
Competition

Digital Photography and Imaging
David D Busch £17.99

There are two types of practical photography books, the general interest ones that cover pretty well everything and the more specialist tome with loads of juicy tips on this, that and the other. Digital Photography and Imaging is certainly the former and aims to help you get the most out of digital cameras. At a whopping 324 pages it certainly covers all the bases from selecting a camera or scanner to different type of photography, sports, portrait, PR shots, people and composition, including basic Web requirements.

Some space and examples are provided on setting up a mini studio and special effects in image editing programs. All round the book is competent for the first timer but is not inspirational in any way, nor are the photographs included by the author anything beyond the generic. Handy for the first time user, but it won't be of much use to anyone beyond that stage.

Angel Passage
Alan Moore & Tim Perkins
£12

Performed on London's South Bank as part of a William Blake festival, this is the audio component of what was likely an all singing, all dancing spectacular. Moore intones his own rich and resonant prose over Perkins' sulphurous cabaret soundtrack, leading us on a twisting journey through Blake's worlds of Innocence and Experience, Heaven and Hell. A shining evocation of pure Imagination.
Mark Pilkington

Up for grabs this issue are five copies of The Castle of Cagliostro and Shamenspace. But first, a skill-testing question needs to be answered for each item.

1. To win ***The Castle of Cagliostro*** tell us what type of Italian car does Lupin III drive?

2. To win ***Shamenspace*** tell us what Black Ice is in cyberpunk fiction.

Entries need to be sent to:

Competition
Black Ice Magazine
PO Box 92
Brighton BN2 3WR

First correct answers out of the mail bag wins the goodies.